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WAR AND THE FEAR OF GOD

WORKS BY THE

REV. PRINCIPAL JAMES DENNEY, D.D.

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WAR AND THE FEAR OF GOD

BY THE REV. PRINCIPAL

JAMES DENNEY, D.D.

AUTHOR OF 'THE DEATH OF CHRIST'
'JESUS AND THE GOSPEL,' ETC.

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE first eleven pieces in this volume have already appeared in the *British Weekly* on the dates under which they stand. The others have in common with them a reference, in the light of the Christian faith, to various aspects of the situation created for the Church and the nation by the war.

J. D.

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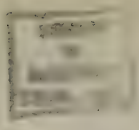
I

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND THE WAR



THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND THE WAR

August 13, 1914

THE speeches of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have convinced the country that the war in which we are now engaged was forced upon us. On all that we do in the necessary pursuance of it we can, to use the words of Lincoln in a great crisis, invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favour of Almighty God. But to be sure that it is just and inevitable does not mitigate its horrors. It does not lighten the load of perplexity that it lays on every Christian heart. The wrecked homes, the anguish of hearts made desolate, the prolonged and searching privations which are only too probable, and from which those will suffer most who are least able to bear them—these appeal at once to everybody. And more trying even than these by themselves is the difficulty of bringing them into any relation to our faith. To a humane spirit all war is fratricidal, but war between Christians involves guilt of a deeper dye. What can it mean when men who have

all been baptised in the name of Jesus have no way of adjusting their differences but that of force? If we saw all the peoples of Asia, or all the tribes of Africa, engaged in internecine strife, we should say it was because they were untouched by Christianity; but when we look at Europe to-day what can we say? What is the duty of Christians in a situation like this? How can they maintain and exhibit their faith?

It must needs be, our Lord tells us, that offences come, and granting that they must come at all, the scale on which they come is not the matter of moment. They come in an appalling magnitude in war, and they challenge us to continue believing in a just and merciful God. They provoke to materialism, to cynicism, to unbelief, with an overbearing insolence. Believe in God? No, rather believe in the big battalions. Count up your ships and your men and your money, and put your trust in them; the scene in which you have now to act is one in which God does not count. Temptations like these, which war against the soul, the Christian must resist to the death. They are the most fatal of his spiritual foes. In spite of all its pomp and circumstance, its splendours and its horrors, war is not more real than God. It is possible to be a witness to Him through all its loud

assaults on faith. 'Pharaoh, King of Egypt,' says Jeremiah, 'is but a noise.' It was a noise that shook the nations then, but it has fallen still enough now. So have far louder noises—Cæsar, Attila, Napoleon—but the prophet's faith lives, and in all spiritual minds his voice awakes an echo that no thunder of cannon can drown. This is the faith that we are bound to maintain. One who is higher than the highest regards all that is taking place, and the last word will be with Him. The regular opposite of faith in the Bible is fear: be not afraid, it is always telling us, only believe. Such faith is the best security against panic. It assures us that whatever happens God is over all, and that while we are right with Him no real harm can come to us. It saves us, too, from unworthy thoughts of those to whom we are opposed. We do not want to hate even our enemies, and we dare not hate them if we remember that the same God is over them and us. He made the Germans, and made them in His own image, as well as the British and the French, and we dare not do despite to that image in any human creature. The Church, says Lacordaire, has at one and the same time chanted victory and honoured defeat, as God, from the height of His throne, in spite of the diversity of nations and events, extends over all the passionate impartiality of His love.

There are some things which help us to keep the faith amid the trials of a time like the present. One is the discovery it makes of God's power to bring good out of evil. We have seen this in the sudden arrest of internal strife in the country. Parliamentary faction and industrial unrest are in suspense for the time being; the common cause commands the undivided loyalty of the people. The men in uniform visible everywhere tell us how many there are who are willing to die for their country. The man who has nothing for which he would die has nothing to make life worth living, and the secret of life has been found when men find something to which life itself may be given. 'The highest merit in war is due to the soldier.' It is due to him not as the man who kills, but as the man who dies for his country. Nothing is more alien to faith than the brutal philosophy of Nietzsche, echoed too often in Kipling, which makes war the only nurse of the heroic virtues, and confounds might with right; but nothing is more akin to faith, nothing more strongly reinforces faith, than the prevalence of the spirit in which men count not even their life dear to them when they see something imperilled which is dearer even than life. The dark side of war should not blind us to its spiritual side. Perhaps the very horror

with which it fills us should prompt us rather to ask whether we do not constantly live in the presence of an equal sum of evils, to which we are indifferent only because they are not so violently obtruded on us. 'War,' said Canon Mozley, in a sermon preached at the time of the last invasion of France by Germany—'war is hateful as a physical scourge, like a pestilence or a famine; and, again, it is hateful on account of the passions of those who originate it, and on account of the excesses of those who serve in it. But if we take the bad effects on those who serve in it by themselves—it is not impossible to exaggerate them, at least by comparison; for while war has its criminal side, peace is not innocent; and who can say that more sin is not committed every day in every capital of Europe than on the largest field of battle?' This is not said to abate our sense of the horrors of war, but to remind us that the horrors are not all. War is elevated by sacrifice, by the mixed effect of glory and grief, and in this aspect of it is not the enemy, but the ally, of faith.

And faith has still stronger and more direct supports to which it must have recourse in this crisis. One is the ministry of intercession. Perhaps our prayers for the State, for the King and the Royal Family are as apt as most to become

formal. But how can they be formal in an hour like the present? Who can think of the awful burden of responsibility borne by those who are at the head of affairs, both in our own and other countries, without praying for them? Are there men in all the world who need more than they the constant presence and help of God—to be made wise with His wisdom and strong with His strength, to be delivered from pride and passion, to be ruled themselves by the fear of God and the love of righteousness? And it is not only they who claim a place in our prayers. We have to think of those who are in the fighting line, of the soldiers and sailors who are all the time exposed to death for us, who taste as no others can war's exultations and its agonies, and who alone know what it means. We have to think of the families that have sent them forth and know not whether they will ever welcome them home again—of the suspense, the mourning, the fear, the pride, which raise love itself to a new power. We have to think of the great masses of the population in our own and other countries which will suffer unknown privations before the end comes. Not to pray for all this mass of care and sorrow is the sure way to lose faith. Who can bear it but God? Who could bear to think of it except with God? 'O Thou

that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come.'

Side by side with the ministry of intercession, and an equally powerful and indispensable ally to faith, is the ministry of charity. Every one rejoices that the State is taking a wider view of its responsibilities in this connection than it has ever done before, and that the Government contemplate using the £100,000,000 voted by Parliament, not only for strictly military or naval purposes, but for any national need arising out of the war. But with the best will in the world the Government cannot cope with all the needs which will emerge. If the conflict is prolonged at all, there is certain to be distress from unemployment on a scale which we have never known. It is the duty of every citizen, and pre-eminently of every Christian, to have this in mind, and to the utmost of his power to be ready to contribute to its relief. Those who have anything to do with raising money for what are ordinarily spoken of as charitable objects know how many people there are from whom they must expect nothing. They say they have nothing to give, and when they say so they tell the truth. But they have nothing to give because they have already in mere indulgence spent everything upon themselves. It is one of the perils of a long time

of peace and prosperity that people fall into the habit of thinking they can live thus; they do not need to think of others, for others are quite able to look after themselves, and they spend their own money without thinking, because there is more where it came from. We are passing into a period in which this isolation and selfishness will be evidently impossible. We shall all need one another. The cause of the nation is one cause, and we must stand by one another till we see it through. It will not be a bad effect of the war if it cures large numbers of people of their thriftless selfishness, and compels them to be economical, self-denying and thoughtful for others. No doubt there will be need in the ministry of charity for voluntary workers as well as money, and we may depend on it they will be forthcoming, and that Christian women will be conspicuous among them. We quote Lincoln again: 'I have never studied the art of paying compliments to women. But I must say that if all that has been said by orators and poets since the creation of the world in praise of women were applied to the women of America, it would not do them justice for their conduct during this war.' No less will be said of the women of our own country when the present war is finished. There is no anodyne for suspense, no prophylactic

against panic, like active love. And what is more, there is no inspiration to faith like love; it is in love it lives and moves and has its being. 'With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right —let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up this nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and orphan; to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace.'

II

THE WAR AND THE NATIONAL CONSCIENCE

THE WAR AND THE NATIONAL CONSCIENCE

August 20, 1914

A GREAT and sudden crisis like the war stirs thoughts and emotions that reach far beyond the hour and its duties. Conscience is indivisible, and when it is quickened at all it is quickened altogether. The national conscience is clear with regard to Germany, but do the searchings of heart which follow on this tremendous crisis reach no further? Our immediate duty is to stake everything in defence of our own freedom and of the very elements of justice in international relations. We are bound to do this and can do it with a good conscience, but now that the national conscience has been appealed to, has it nothing more to say? Are there not things which enter into a nation's greatness, into its strength to fight the Lord's battle, of which we have been too negligent, and the neglect of which weakens our arm to-day? Are we not called in the hour of peril to think of these things and to resolve that the instant our hands are free they will have our attention as they have never had

before? We venture to mention one or two in words which have the authority of Holy Scripture behind them.

I

The first concerns our duty to the future citizens of the State, the children to whom its greatness is to be transmitted as an inheritance and a responsibility. The very first time the Bible speaks of national greatness it emphasises the truth that its foundation must be laid in the religious training and discipline of the young. Abraham, says God, shall surely become a great and mighty nation, *for I have taken knowledge of him that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment.* The final strength of a nation is the sum of character in it which has been kept sound from childhood by this noble upbringing. Nothing else in man is sterling. Most of us are wearied with discussions on religious education, and especially with disputes as to what can be done for it by the nation and the Church respectively. For governments, as Carlyle said two generations ago, religion has degenerated into the religious difficulty—*they* can do nothing: and as far as their own immature members are concerned, there seem to be Churches

which have little interest in Christian education except to get the burden of it laid on some other authority than themselves. After all, it may not so much matter. Religious education is not the task of either the Church or the State, but of the family. 'I have taken knowledge of him that he may command *his children*.' The main help that can be given to it by Church and State is that which they give when they maintain the sanctity of the family and its life. No doubt children should have their place acknowledged in both. One part of the Church's work is to naturalise Christianity in the world, and children brought up in the Christian Church should absorb Christian principle and exhibit Christian conduct just as certainly as they absorb and exhibit the patriotism of their race. But the family is fundamental. It is the ethical unit, and in the natural relations and affections God has laid down the lines along which Christian convictions and principles can be most effectively transmitted. This has far less to do than is usually supposed with dogmatic or doctrinal instruction. Its essence is a kind of obedience. It is 'to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.' Through all the earlier years of life it might be summed up in what Shakespeare calls 'domestic awe.' The maintenance in the family of any

atmosphere which could be so described becomes increasingly difficult with the growth of great cities. Family life, with its close and strong ties, is inevitably weakened by the multiplication of other relationships; young people are tempted too soon —before principle is fixed by the habit of obedience —by a life the seductions of which they feel, but the issues of which they cannot understand. They drift in it without conviction, and though they may be clever they are not strong. When we pray for the victory of the nation, let us be sure that there is no victory without discipline, and that the only discipline which can be universally and beneficently effective is that of the Christian home. In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence.

II

There is another point at which the war may well touch the national conscience. War is a great leveller: whatever the artificial distinctions between them, whatever the inevitable differences of rank, on the field of battle all men stand on the same plane. They are face to face with the same dangers, they can display the same heroism; the humblest can give his life to his country, and the noblest can do no more. A generous spirit acknowledges this without reserve. 'He to-day that sheds his blood

with me shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile, this day shall gentle his condition.' But why is it only acknowledged in the crisis of a battle? Why is not the brotherhood acknowledged equally in time of peace? When the ancient Israelite had his name entered on the register of citizens he paid a tax to the sanctuary. It was not heavy, but it had this remarkable law connected with it: 'The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less.' An essential equality belonged to men by the constitution of the people of God. Every citizen was one to God, no one was more, and no one was less. It is tempting for the rich to use their wealth to engross political responsibility, and it is tempting for the poor to make their poverty an excuse for declining it, but both are forbidden. The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less. The equality and brotherhood that shine out on the field of battle, where the last sacrifice may be demanded of all, where rich and poor alike may cast themselves into the breach and offer to their country the homage of their being, must be reflected somehow in the whole constitution of the nation. It may be difficult to define equality—Lord Bryce, in a lecture on the subject, distinguishes no less than seven various applications of the term—but that we want

more equality in our country is as certain to conscience as any truth can be. To take the most glaring of illustrations, we want more equality in the rate of payment for different kinds of work. It does not matter what the work is, if it takes a man's life in the doing of it; it is the man and not the work that has to be considered. There are many men making ten times as much money as their fathers made who know that they are not better men than their fathers were, either in body or mind or character; neither do they work harder, perhaps not nearly so hard; only they happen to work at something for which higher wages are paid. There is no reason for this in the nature of things, and the conventional reasons for it will have to be overcome. Dr. Johnson was a great believer in subordination: he held that it added to the happiness of life even for the subordinate. But he had a manly sympathy for those who toil at the lower employments of life, where success is without applause and diligence without reward; and it is these lower employments which, simply because, equally with the higher, they demand the lives of men, are entitled to put in, and with the secret assent of all men's consciences will certainly put in, their claim to a more equal treatment. If the lives of poor men laid down in battle by land or sea prepare the

conscience of the nation to recognise this claim more willingly, they will not have been laid down in vain.

III

There is another connection still in which the national conscience may well have been touched at this crisis. One of its most gratifying accompaniments has been the readiness with which all the King's dominions have offered their help to the homeland. It is not the British nation, but the British Empire which is at war with Germany. Now part of what distinguishes the Empire from the nation is its contact with other, and what we too readily call inferior or subject races. We measure its greatness by the population over which it rules, or perhaps by the area over which the flag flies. Our Lord has shown us a more excellent way, and in the very act of maintaining the Empire against an assault aimed at its disintegration we are called to bear His words in mind. Nothing can justify the existence of the Empire but the benefits it confers on the subject populations; its right to rule is measured by the services it renders. 'The princes of the heathen lord it over them, and their great ones deal arbitrarily with them, but it shall not be so among you.' One of the first lessons

we learn in school—it gets into the most elementary history books—is that when a less advanced nation is conquered by one more advanced the benefits of the conquest in the long run far surpass the immediate losses. Very likely it is true, but in most cases the long run is very long, and the conquered nation, while it may have cause to thank Providence, has no reason to bless its conquerors. There is a very dark side to the history of most of the conquests which have laid the foundations even of the British Empire; again and again our sins have found us out, and they may do so again. But it must be gratefully acknowledged that where the Government and its officers are concerned Christian conceptions of duty are growingly influential. It is not so much among them as among traders and settlers that conscience needs to be quickened. There are indeed signal exceptions, but who can believe that the general influence of contact with what we call Christian civilisation, when that contact has been simply commercial, has been uplifting and beneficial to men of other races? The practically universal testimony of Christian missionaries is that the great obstacle to the spread of the Gospel is the presence and the conduct of men who, because their skins are white, are supposed to represent Christianity. An Arab merchant

is a missionary for his religion, such as it is; wherever he comes, Islam comes along with him; he propagates and does not discredit the faith with which he is identified. Why should it not be so with the Christian merchant? Why should not his coming, as well as that of the British Government, mark the beginnings of a higher and more disinterested order of things? He should not be there to pillage and exploit, and the conscience of the nation knows that every act of pillage, every policy of exploitation, no matter what wealth it brings home, strikes directly at the solidity and perpetuity of the Empire. It is by stooping to bear the burden of inferior races, by educating them in knowledge and in virtue, by imparting to them what we value most ourselves, by training them for the self-government in which freedom is realised, that we act in the spirit of Jesus and make our imperial future sure.

It is only a conscience quickened by this thought of service that can consecrate patriotism itself and keep it from sin. The love of our country, said Dr. Johnson, when it rises to enthusiasm, is an ambiguous and uncertain virtue. When he thought of the wars between this country and France, in which the foundations of the British Empire were laid in India and America, no good man, he said,

could honestly wish success to either side. The wrongs perpetrated by both on the natives cried to heaven impartially against French and English. But patriotism can be redeemed by being subordinated to the Kingdom of God. For this sublime ideal, which is also a sublime reality, all nations have a calling, even those which are at war with one another. It is when they are false to it, as Germany has now proved false, that they cannot stand in the judgment, and it is only as we are true to it, and prepared to co-operate with all who recognise its superiority, that we can believe God is on our side. And we pray for peace to come speedily, that the ideal may shine forth again in commanding splendour, and that all the nations may vie with each other in rendering homage to it together.

III

THE WAR AND THE FEAR OF GOD

THE WAR AND THE FEAR OF GOD

January 21, 1915

One result of the war has been immediate and unmistakable; it has made multitudes who were living on the surface of existence suddenly aware of its unsounded depths. In one way or another they have come to realise in human affairs a presence and power more than human. The unseen and the eternal have forced themselves into their thoughts as the ultimate realities with which it lies to say the last word even in this dreadful conflict; there has been a new birth in their souls of that elemental type of religion which the Old Testament calls the fear of God.

In the first instance the fear of God operates as a restraint on human lawlessness. There are many things done, both in peace and war, which could not be done but by men who have no fear of God before their eyes. All experience teaches us how little human beings are to be trusted if they have others helplessly in their power, and the ruthless devastation of Belgium by the Germans is a sombre confirmation of the lesson. It is reinforced by the official report of the French Commission, with its verified record of rape, arson, murder, and pillage.

It is impossible not to be moved by such things. Those who make themselves responsible for them stand outlawed by the common conscience of mankind, and condemned at the judgment seat of God. No plea can justify them, and no power can shield them from retribution. But they are not to be repaid in kind. It is an old and wise comment on war that when it lasts long it ends in the combatants borrowing each other's weapons. There is a danger lest they should borrow also each other's methods, and while they rise to the same height of military efficiency sink to the same depth of moral debasement. Against this the fear of God must be our security. These barbarous misdeeds must be punished, but not with the wild justice of revenge, not by doing in Germany the very things which we condemn in Belgium and France. And we can be sure they will be punished. It is of such things it is written, *Shall not God search this out? When He maketh inquisition for blood He remembereth them, He forgetteth not the cry of the humble.* Self-mastery will always vanquish lawlessness, and the self-restraint inspired by the fear of God is not our weakness, but our strength in battle.

The God-fearing men who wrote the Bible found much more in their consciousness of God than a

restraint. It was an indispensable support to them in evil days. *In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and His children shall have a place of refuge.* Those who fear God can appeal to Him, and be confident that He will not fail them. Many good people are sincerely perplexed when they think that Christians in Germany are praying for victory for their country just as Christians here are praying for victory for ours, the tacit assumption being that appeal can be made to God with an equally good conscience on both sides. If this were true we should have no right to be in the war at all. But the assumption must simply be denied. A nation which entered upon war by deliberately tearing up a treaty it had solemnly sworn to keep has lost its title to appeal to a God of truth. A nation which avows that its methods of war are methods of *Schrecklichkeit*, that its aim is to terrorise the civil population by lawless and merciless atrocities, and to leave them nothing but their eyes to weep with, has forfeited every claim to appeal to the Father of mercies. We are not relapsing to belief in a tribal deity when we think and speak thus. What it means is that our conscience is clear, that we have no perjury and no barbarities to charge ourselves with in our relations to Germany ; in short, that we are fighting the battle of truth and

humanity, which is the Lord's battle, and for that reason can count on His support.

It is only another way of putting this if we say that the issue of the war depends ultimately on spiritual as well as on material forces. The nations are busy counting their men and guns and horses, their ships, their revenues, their food supplies; it is not so easy, but it is just as important, to estimate the stock of staunch and saving virtues they possess, born of the fear of God. Which is strongest in justice, in truth, in temperance, in purity? Nothing, it may be safely asserted, has done more to impair both the material strength and the moral assurance of our own country than the deplorable failure of the Government to put any arrest upon the liquor trade during this fateful crisis in the national life. Does a nation really fear God, can it count on Him as its shield, when in spite of all warning, and in defiance of all good example, it gives free scope in an hour like this to a business the accumulated horrors of which transcend all that is wrought by war, pestilence, and famine? It is late, but it is not yet too late to do what should have been done from the beginning, and to give the nation the opportunity of sustaining this tremendous trial with its moral energies unimpaired by strong drink.

The war has brought out into clear consciousness the principles upon which some nations and their statesmen act, and by doing so has reminded us of the most profound and wonderful thing the Bible tells us of the fear of God—namely, that it is *the beginning of wisdom.* All men long to be wise. They long to understand and to master life. They wish to know its nature and its laws, to see what is inevitable in it, and what is impossible, to get the vital good out of it which they assume it contains. To judge from the philosophies and the practices current, there must be vast numbers of men whose apprehension of life is quite untouched by any consciousness of God. They look out upon the world, and it is nothing to them but a scene in which the greed and ambition of each are in conflict with the greed and ambition of all. They are confident that they can enter into the conflict with a greed and an ambition more grasping and resourceful than any which is already in the field, and they are confident that nothing else is wanted to give them the dominating place. No doubt great powers can be displayed in this way. Great intellectual abilities may be developed in appealing to all human motives but the highest. Great successes can be achieved by men who can bring themselves to be cynical, unscrupulous, and brutal—the success

of the wolf with the lamb, and of all who hold that might is right. But they are not permanent successes. The wisdom which prides itself on them is foolishness with God. It is radically unsound and its confutation will be swift and overwhelming. The mind of man can make no greater mistake than to assume that there is nothing in the world which it cannot master, nothing which it cannot bend and compel to serve the ends of its pride, nothing that will prove refractory to uncompromising force. The last reality is beyond all these, and it has the last word. It is the moral order established and sustained by God, commanding the instinctive reverence of all who fear Him, and shattering the insolence of the strongest who ignore it. Sometimes in Scripture the fool means the silly, weak-minded person who cannot be taught even by experience that there are moral laws in life at all, but far oftener he is the strong-minded or strong-headed person, the *esprit fort*, who thinks he can override these laws with impunity. The typical fool is a man like Nebuchadnezzar or the first Napoleon, a man to whom might is right and to whom everything is legitimate if it is possible—a man, in a word, who holds the political and military principles by which the advocates of Germany have justified the present war. The end of such men

reads its lesson clearly enough. When Napoleon was at the height of his power, the Russian diplomatist Woronzof declared that in spite of all his abilities he would come to a bad end for want of good sense. A Bible writer would have said for lack of wisdom, or because there was no fear of God before his eyes. It will not be the least gain of the war if we learn from it again to trust rather the heart's instinctive pieties than the daring philosophies of politics which leave God out of the reckoning. Who is a fool but the man who is blind to the moral order, or who thinks he can outwit or defy it? Who is a wise man but he into whose mind this final and solemn reality sinks deeper and deeper with all his experience of life, till at last, as Isaiah says, he draws his breath in the fear of the Lord?

The restraint, the support, the illuminating virtue of the fear of God, are made vivid to us at present in a terrible experience which makes all things vivid, but they are not for the time of war alone. In peace also men are tried by getting others into their power, and fall by abusing their power, because no human law restrains them. Who could estimate the wrongs done to the poor, to women, and especially to children, because they are at the mercy of others who do not fear God?

Who could tell what is lost in serenity, in moral assurance, in practical discernment, because our hearts are not right with the Creator and moral Governor of the world? In all services of intercession for the nation a place should be found for the prayer, *Unite our hearts to fear Thy Name.*

IV

MAN AND MONEY

MAN AND MONEY

February 4, 1915

An ancient historian, speaking of his countrymen, says that in the course of a long war they proved more willing to give their blood than their money for the State. They were willing to enlist and to give personal service, but they were not willing to pay heavy taxes. Whether the same feeling exists to any extent in our own country it is probably impossible to tell. The importance of money for the carrying on of the war, and the disturbing effect of the war on the ordinary ways in which people make and spend their money, are indubitable. The Government, by prohibiting new investments of capital in foreign countries, and only allowing them on conditions even in the King's dominions, has made every one see that there is one thing in the world at least which is beyond price, and to which all savings if need be must be sacrificed—the life and independence of the State. Even if the Gospel is left out of account, money is not the only, nor the ultimate, standard of value. But all that teaches this lesson is in harmony with the Gospel, and sends us back to the words of Jesus.

Every one who is familiar with the New Testament knows how much our Lord spoke of wealth, and how startlingly unlike the current ideas on the subject are those which He expresses. Most men are afraid to be poor, but if there is anything in the teaching of Jesus we ought to be afraid to be rich. The Englishman's hell, Carlyle said, is to be poor; but Jesus says, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of Heaven!' Why should this be so? How is it that wealth is able to bar the way to eternal life? There must be some power in it to delude men, the power which Jesus has in view when He speaks of the deceitfulness of riches. In a matter so important it is well to ask what experience teaches.

We see one mode in which wealth deludes if we look to those who are born to it. For most men it is easy—indeed, it is almost inevitable—to think that they have a right to what they are born to. It is just like a right to be themselves. If they are born to wealth it raises no more question in their minds than anything else in the order of nature. Without deliberately thinking anything about it—thinking would shake the delusion—they feel and act as if they really were a superior class, creatures moulded of a finer clay than the poor, and justly entitled to all that their wealth

secures them under the present order. They have a natural conviction that the world is very well as it is, and that all demands from beneath for reconsideration are akin to mutiny, and are to be suppressed, if need be, by martial law. There are some natures in which this temptation when yielded to produces real insolence and heartlessness, others in which it stops at mere narrowness of mind. Its victims live in a class, and never get beyond its ideas and its prejudices. They have a total want of sense for the vast life of humanity. The spiritual movements which agitate the race, and on which it is borne upward and onward, remain strange to them. The constitution of our society is such, perhaps inevitably such, that it is easier for women than for men to live within the limits of a class, and hence women born to wealth are even more liable than men to fall into this narrow-minded, unfeeling, and even insolent attitude to those who are not of their own order. This is one mode in which the deceitfulness of riches comes out. They tend to separate those who possess them from those who do not, and we are slow to learn the simple truth, which is the very basis of Christianity, that all that separates us from our fellow-creatures separates us also from God. Did not He that made me in the womb make him ? says Job, mean-

ing by 'him' the poor man. When wealth hides from its possessors the truth that the rich and the poor are one at heights and depths where it does not count, it exercises a ruinous power to deceive.

Nor does it belie its character if we look to those who do not inherit, but acquire it. Except in very rare cases, a man does not make a fortune without the exercise of valuable qualities, both intellectual and moral. The successful exercise of these qualities reacts upon his character and generates self-reliance. The man trusts himself more than he did before. He has proved his competence in a certain field of action, and feels confident that he can maintain himself there. He feels his position secure. He is insured against accidents and against rivals; without saying so in set terms he feels as if he were insured against Providence itself. He says in his heart, I shall never be moved. Of course, this is not what always or inevitably happens. There are men who have made fortunes, and know better than to trust in the uncertainty of riches. Nevertheless, it is what easily and often happens. There are multitudes of people to whom a balance at the bank, or an annuity, or an established business, or a sum of investments, are really more than the living God. They have been deceived by their riches into building their life

rather on them than on Him. Would it not be better to be poor and to have faith in God ? Some touchstone is wanted to show whether a man has succumbed to this particular delusion, and probably a better could not be found than the Beatitudes : ' Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' These are the highest and most vital of all truths, but where is their truth felt ? Is it in the world in which riches exert their delusive spell, drawing out irresistible desires, and filling men with self-assurance ? Or is not that the very world from which we must escape if the word of Jesus is to speak to us at all ?

To forget God is an immense delusion, but it is not the only one incident to this situation. It is apt to affect a man's relations to his fellows as well as to his Maker. He is the person who has succeeded, and the rest are those who have failed. That is how his success prompts him to think of them. He has succeeded because he deserved to succeed. He had the qualities which command

success — diligence, forethought, energy, thrift, daring, self-denial. They have failed because they deserved to fail. They had no character or no brains. Nature launched them on the difficult adventure of life without sufficient capital, and the result is just what was to be expected. It is very hard for a man, tempted by his own success to indulge in such reflections, to stop short of a kind of contempt for his fellow-creatures. And it will not always be good-natured contempt. The conflict in which he has succeeded is like all conflicts; there are opportunities in it of pressing an advantage, of being not quite fair to a rival, of taking instead of giving the benefit of a doubt, of being relentless and unscrupulous to carry a point. Are there many men who have made fortunes without doing something they could wish to revise? One of the most painful consequences of such actions is that they usually furnish illustrations of the Latin proverb that we hate those whom we have injured. We hate them because they put us in the wrong. Is not this the cause of much of the self-righteousness and hardness of heart with which the rich so often judge the poor? It is necessary for their own justification that they should say resolutely that the poor have what they have worked for. They are poor because

they have the defects or the vices which beget poverty, just as they themselves are rich because they have the virtues or the talents which ensure wealth. But can any one who has ever been within hearing of the New Testament imagine that this unfeeling and self-righteous temper will commend men to God? Could there be a more profound delusion than to suppose that any such self-justification could put us right with Him?

The ludicrous side of the deceitfulness of riches has been a commonplace of satire ever since riches began to be; but, like vanity in general, it may be tragic as well as absurd. The rich man is wise in his own conceit, says Solomon. He has learned to trust his judgment in the field of action in which he has made his fortune, and he is only too ready to trust it in other fields. Probably he is peculiarly ready to trust it in politics and theology; a little more diffident, because a good deal more indifferent, if the subject is literature or art. Every tendency in these directions is fostered in the rich by flattery. People defer to the rich man, or affect to do so. They nourish his self-esteem till it is almost impossible for him not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think. The deference which at first is distrusted is at last craved, and the whole life becomes unreal. But nothing cuts us off from

God more surely than unreality. We cannot walk in a vain show and walk humbly with Him. It is impossible to listen at the same time to the voice of flattery and the voice of Jesus.

The most widespread delusion about wealth is that which we observe, not in those who possess, but in those who are in quest of it. It has a strange power of inspiring hopes which it is quite unable to fulfil. We think that if we were rich our life would be so much fuller and happier, we should be able to do so much more good, we should not spend our days as we are compelled to do amid care and worry, but be free to think disinterestedly of others, as well as of ourselves. This is not only a widespread, but a potent delusion. It turns the mind away from being and doing and enjoying to acquiring. It denies the truth which Jesus proclaimed so insistently, that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses. Most of us habitually behave as if it did. We want to possess, and always to possess more, and if we do not it is as though we had no life at all. But Jesus did not possess anything —except the fulness of the Godhead, that fulness from which the empty souls of men have been replenished through all the ages. And we may ourselves have known some one, perhaps have

had the happiness to live with some one, in whom life was an inexhaustible and everflowing spring, a constant welling up of goodness and truth, with which wealth had nothing to do. It is rare that a man of the highest spiritual power has been interested in money; as St. Paul says, it is the poor who make many rich.

No reflection will render any one immune to the deceitfulness of riches, and the one specific which neutralises it, according to the Gospel, is charity. Burns says somewhere that money seems to impart a bird-lime quality to the fingers of its owners; it is not easy for them to part with it. But to part with it for unselfish ends, to give it away to objects greater than our private self and its interests—to humanity, to religion, to a common good—is the only way to be emancipated from its deceitfulness. If we cannot part with it we are mastered by it, and subject to all the delusions referred to, and to many more. But if we can and do part with it for unselfish ends, we have found out the one secret connected with it which is worth learning—the secret of transmuting the currency of earth into the currency of heaven, and becoming rich toward God. The appeals that are being made to the country at present for aid to the Belgians, the Red Cross Society, the National

Relief Fund, and similar objects, are not best described as appeals for charity, but they are a very useful test of the value we put upon money. And, at the same time, they are a very useful test of whether we know God. What has a man to do with God who actually weighs money against the agonies of men and nations ?

V

THE DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT

THE DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT

August 12, 1915

MUCH is heard at present of the peculiar difficulties presented to Christian faith by the spectacle of the war and its consequences. It is not the course of events, but their character, in which the trouble lies. Our perplexities might be aggravated if what we believe to be the unrighteous cause were to come victorious from the conflict, but they will not disappear in the contrary event. It is the conflict itself which puts faith to the question. Is the thing we see salvation? Is this all that Christianity can do after it has had Europe in tutelage for fifteen hundred years?

It is no answer to the question, but it puts us in a better position to see its true scope if we notice that it has been a question ever since Christianity has had a history. The latest and most wonderful of the New Testament writers, he who had the profoundest sense of the eternal truth of the Christian revelation and of the eternal worth of the experiences which it inspires, was perplexed by it exactly as we are. But though it was a trial to faith, it never became in him a motive to doubt.

In the opening verses of his Gospel St. John tells us, in words the transparent depth and simplicity of which we can never fathom, what Jesus is to God, to the world, and to the human race. He sums it up, so far as mankind is concerned, in the sentence, 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.' This is the experience and the conviction of the Apostle; it is the sure and immutable truth in which he has lived his long life, and will die at last his appointed death. But when he turns from it to give a summary of the gospel history, to state in a sentence the fortune of the Christian revelation in the two generations through which he has watched it, what a disconcerting shock he gives us: 'And the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not.' He does not indeed withdraw his affirmation. He has no doubt, so to speak, in himself. It is one of the truly wonderful things about the gospels that there is no perhaps in them, no misgiving, nothing ventured to be withdrawn, but a clear, steady light shining immovably like a star. Faith should have the same steadiness, and the strong apostolic faith had it; but it had to maintain it in face of an immense disappointment. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not taken it in.

I

This is the trial of our faith at the present moment, and perhaps we feel it more at the moment because we are not ordinarily as alive as we should be to the disappointing results of Christianity in human history. The darkness of the war is what oppresses us, to a great extent for interested reasons, but the darkness did not begin with the war. How few of those who find their faith perplexed now were perplexed before by the darkness which covered the heathen world—a darkness in which miseries and horrors reign from generation to generation unrelieved? How few were perplexed by the darkness in Christendom itself, by the vast populations in every city in Europe, and in Britain as much as elsewhere, who had not apprehended the light, but supported an existence untouched by what the evangelist calls life, an existence with nothing in it assured, joyous, eternal, divine? The finger of God has touched us in the war in our own persons, and we wonder that Christianity is so disappointing; if we had been better Christians we would have wondered sooner. It is a call to us to think of duties we have overlooked, and to bear a testimony to our Lord so faithful that it will not be possible for any one

within its range to think that the light is failing. And, indeed, it is not failing, and we must not think so. The light shines still, even as it shone when St. John wrote, in spite of the uncomprehending darkness. It shines in spite of all that has happened, and is happening, in Belgium and France and Poland. We do not need to believe, and no one with any knowledge of history and of human nature will believe, that war is a regenerating experience to the ordinary soldier. It is a tremendous experience, and noble natures may rise through it, and by reaction from it, to a rarer nobility. But a disbanded army is not a new *congregatio sanctorum*, and the admiration of chaplains for the men to whom they minister must not make us think so. Nevertheless, the light shines. In numberless instances it is the pure sense of Christian duty that has sent men into the Army. There are thousands of them who have the Gospels in their knapsacks and Christ in their hearts. There are thousands in whom heroism and humanity are united in the very spirit of Jesus. There are countless women showing the kindness of God to the wounded in His name. There is a new sense of responsibility in this country, at all events, for all who suffer by the war and its consequences, a new sense of brotherhood. In spite of

everything, in face of the deepest and most distressing darkness, the light does shine.

II

But why does it not shine more? Perhaps we cannot tell. It may be more difficult than we know to judge truly of the progress or the power of the Gospel. Even the Apostles, while they had no misgivings about its truth, seem to have been influenced by moods when they speak of its success. St. John himself tells us what are on the surface the most opposite things about it in his own time. We read in the same chapter of the Gospel that all men are coming to Jesus, and that no one is receiving his testimony. We read in the same epistle that the darkness is passing away and the light already shining, and that the whole world is lying in the Wicked One. Our elations and depressions are not to be made too much of, we should rather in a time like this try to steady our minds on whatever truth the word of God reveals as bearing on such a situation.

One such truth is that the long continuance of the conflict between light and darkness demonstrates the long-suffering of God. The evangelist does not tell us where the darkness came from, but it is here, and it is hostile to Him. It is here

not as a fog in the air, but in the minds, hearts, and wills of human beings, made in God's image, and with no chief end, no chief good, but in Him. It is not the saints only to whom the darkness is a trial; it is a trial to God Himself. But He is not willing that any should perish, and therefore He does not execute judgment speedily, but endures with much long-suffering, and gives space for repentance. Of all books in the Bible, the Revelation of St. John is that in which the power of the darkness is most painfully felt, and it is characteristic of it that the cry, 'How long, O Lord, how long,' pervades its prayers, and that they are summed up at last in the impatient, loving word, 'Come quickly!' But it is no less characteristic that the writer describes himself to his readers as their companion in the tribulation and kingdom and *patience* that are in Jesus. He waits for His kingdom; we may wait, and we may be sure that the light which shone under Nero and Domitian will not be quenched even under the Emperor William.

But the long-suffering of God, though it bears with the darkness, does not condone it. There is no patience in God which obliterates moral distinctions. The Bible gives a very plain and a very solemn explanation of the continuance of the

darkness that we cannot afford to overlook. This is the condemnation, it tells us, that light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil. There were always those who were uneasy in the presence of Jesus, because they had things they wanted to hide. They shunned His presence because they feared exposure. They did not take in the light because they did not want to. It is perhaps creditable to human nature that it is slow to believe this, and always wants to reduce sin to some kind of ignorance. But nothing is more certain, according to the teaching of Scripture, than that there is such a thing in the world as a bad man. We have to reckon with people who love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. It is not the fault of Christianity; Christianity, as St. Paul says, is not their affair. But the possibility that such men should be, and the clear teaching of the Gospel as to how they come to be, warn us not to have anything in our life that craves concealment. That is the kind of thing which avoids Christ, which fears the light, and perpetuates the reign of darkness. It is the kind of thing which annihilates faith in ourselves, and perplexes and paralyses it in others.

III

The Bible has much to say to those who, in spite of all the darkness, can say, with the Apostle, 'The light shineth.' The light is not here to look at, but to see by and to live by. In various places we are told to walk in the light, to rejoice in the light, to believe in the light, to bear witness to the light, to abide in the light, to be children of the light. If we kept these commandments, what a radiant, reassuring, joyful thing Christian life would be! How inspiriting in this dark world! No doubt this is one of the great lessons of the darkness; it cries to all who are Christians, 'Let your light shine.' It is not for us to look at the clouds that shadow the earth, and complain that there are no signs of God's presence anywhere; if there are really none, it is we who are to blame. The psalmist tells of God looking down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek God, and having the same disappointment as we have when we fear that the Gospel has failed. 'They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no not one.' If we have seen the light which shines from the face of Jesus, it is for us to remove this

disappointment to the expectation of God, this trial to the faith of men. Where is God's presence to be looked for on earth if not in the lives of men made in His image and renewed by His Son? Our business, once we have seen Jesus, is not to demand proof that God is with men, but to provide it. It is to abide in the light and diffuse its radiance. It is to keep it shining, however deep the darkness, and to overcome evil with good. This is the Lord's battle, which will go on, not for a year or for three years, but till the Lord come; and it is because the part we have to take in the great European war is identical with our part in this age-long conflict that we can count on victory and endure to the end. Only let us do the truth, and we shall prove His word: 'He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'

VI

VICTORY OVER DEATH

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August 26, 1915

The inspired history of the human race opens with a sentence of death, and closes when death is swallowed up in victory. The interval is chequered with much that is great and splendid, but the ominous shadow is never quite lifted. Man can do wonders for himself, but there is one enemy to whom he inevitably succumbs. 'Speech, and wind-swift thought, and all the moods that mould a state, hath he taught himself, and how to flee the arrows of the frost and of the rushing rain; without resource he meets nothing that must come; only against Death shall he call for aid in vain.' So sang Sophocles, in the same key with the apostle who thinks of the human race as those who through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage. But though death is inevitable as the debt of nature, though it is dreadful as the wages of sin, though it is the last enemy that shall be destroyed, there are ways of reacting against it which help to uphold the soul. It can seldom have been more necessary than now, when the terrible casualties of

the war are bringing death to every door, to think how it is to be overcome.

I

It is an elementary kind of victory over death when we make it the motive to a more strenuous life. We have the authority of our Lord's example for this. 'I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work.' We might have thought that He who is yesterday and to-day the same, yes and for ever, needed no such motives; and yet, when we reflect, we see that Jesus acts in the world to this day only through the words and deeds and sufferings of that earthly life, every moment of which was so precious to Him because the night was at hand. In the thought of the coming night he crowded the twelve hours of his brief day with ceaseless activities of grace, and in doing so he vanquished death. He made it an ally, not an enemy. And it is such an ally to all who think of it as He did, exalting instead of paralysing their powers. Death has won its deadliest victory when it makes us think that life is not worth living, but when it intensifies our earnestness and loyalty to duty it has itself been so far overcome.

II

But thinking of death is one thing, actually encountering it is another. Every day death comes near to some one, and robs him of all that he held dear in the world. His wife or his child is taken away, and there is no value in anything that is left. Death has struck him a fatal blow, has inflicted on him an irreparable defeat. But many a man has had experiences in such a situation which amount to a victory over death. Death, if we may put it so, in some wonderful way defeats itself. Though we may not be able to tell how, it makes love more real. It makes all love more real, not only that with which we yearn for the departed, but the very love of God Himself. We are assured in the very presence of death that we can never lose what we have loved in Him. And our love does not die with death ; it is made purer and more spiritual. We learn what Wordsworth meant when he wrote,

> 'The invisible world with thee hath sympathised :
> Be thy affections raised and solemnised.'

God and Death are the two greatest ideas of which the human mind is capable, and when the mind is redeemed from what is sensual and trivial, even by the sorrow of death, the victory of death is more than challenged.

III

The circumstances of the hour remind us that there is an incalculable power in human nature to triumph over death in the very act of dying. We think of it instinctively as a doom or a fatal necessity, something in which man has no part but to submit. But what if it can be deprived of this character? It was a favourite idea of Lacordaire that God turned the primal curse of death into a blessing when He made it possible for man to die freely for a cause. A heroic death, the death of a soldier on the field, the death of a miner in a rescue party, the death of a sailor on the lifeboat, the death of a martyr for God or for humanity—these are not triumphs of death, they are triumphs over death. They are exhibitions of life carried to its highest power, a power so high that death is no more considered. Paul had vanquished death when he cried, 'None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy.' On their own level many, thank God, who have laid down their lives for us in France and at the Dardanelles, have been able to say what the apostle said, and it is a true victory over death. It

is a just consolation also for those who mourn their loss. It raises in their hearts their sense of the worth of what has been taken away, and the only sorrow which has no comfort is that in which there is no such pride.

IV

But after all, such thoughts as these do not match the greatness and the inevitableness of death. Sacrifice and martyrdom are not ends in themselves. They are accepted by the brave and generous for the sake of an end which lies beyond them. They are given that a cause may triumph which has absolute and eternal worth. And if it does triumph, as who can doubt that it will, can we believe that those who made its triumph good at the cost of their lives will be excluded from the victory which they won? The deep heart of man refuses to believe it. Martyrdom and immortality, it might almost be said, are correlative terms; and it is a mere matter of historical fact that the faith in immortality, as it exists in the true religion, has one of its deepest and strongest roots in the surrender of life in God's cause. It is always most vivid and consoling, too, in a persecuted and suffering Church. It is those who lose their lives

fighting the Lord's battle who will find them again to life everlasting. It is the man who cries, 'For Thy sake we are killed all the day long,' who cries in the same breath, 'In all these things we are more than conquerors. Where, death, is thy victory? Where, death, thy sting?' If we have to stop short of this we cannot say that the last enemy has been destroyed. Death can claim its victory till this corruptible has put on incorruption and this mortal has put on immortality.

There are many indications that the tragic experiences of the war are breaking down the Christian secularism which refuses to look beyond the present. The present, with all its wealth and hopes, has been deliberately sacrificed by hundreds and thousands; it is staked every day by millions, in the very spring and pride of life, for something greater and more real. How are we to describe that something, in any relation to those who have died for it, if the thought of immortality be shut out? Christians cannot remind themselves too often that to their Lord immortality was axiomatic. It was part of His faith in the Father, and it loses its reality only for those who lose their hold on God. It was alluded to by Jesus in the most natural way, and sometimes in connections that

surprise us. 'Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do!' How instinctively it is taken for granted that there is something 'after that,' and that in comparison with that something all the hurt that can be done to the body is neither here nor there. Timidity is perhaps more widely spread than we would willingly admit; there are people who cannot help fearing what the war may bring, and in the last resort fearing that they may be killed. Put it at the worst, our Lord says, and how little it amounts to. 'After that, they have no more that they can do.' After that, for those who have been faithful unto death there remains the crown of life. It is touching to reflect that the consolation brought by this thought of the future was not despised by our Lord in view of His own death. As He sat with His disciples at the Last Supper, and thought of the inevitable parting which was now at hand, His mind passed immediately into the future. 'I will no more drink of this fruit of the vine till I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.' Death is so great, and as far as this world goes, so inevitable and so final, that to confront it with any comfort but that of immortality is impertinent and trivial. In the long run we must have this victory over it, or we have none at

all. And surely it should encourage us to take all the comfort and all the inspiration of a hope so wonderful when we see how simply and naturally it is taken by Christ Himself. Reunion with His own in His Father's Kingdom; that is the light that shines for Him above and beyond the garden and the Cross.

Even where faith in immortality is not extinct, it sometimes survives or revives in timid, moralising forms that do no justice to New Testament religion. People are willing to accept it, provided it is not made too great a thing. If it means rather the prolongation of the present than a new and deathless life in another order they are ready to think of it, especially if what they call moral continuity is preserved. It is a little difficult to tell what moral continuity means. Death is a tremendous breach of continuity of some kind, and by all analogy should have strange and perhaps literally immeasurable consequences. When the Westminster divines taught that the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory, and that their bodies being still united to Christ do rest in their graves till the Resurrection, they may have said more than they knew, but they certainly spoke more in the spirit of the New Testament revelation than those who tell us that

death really makes no difference. This is too terrible a faith, or rather too terrible an unbelief. If we had just to go on as we are, with the same degrading temptations, the same moral impotence, the same miserable facility of injuring others and of setting in motion evil we cannot control, most men, like Mr. Godkin, would 'compromise on annihilation.' But the New Testament is written in quite another key. Whatever be the rights of continuity, death is a stupendous event and has stupendous consequences. 'It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.' To depart and to be with Christ is not to prolong life as it is; it is far, far better. We must not decline this as though it were out of proportion to all we are, to all we deserve, to all we can realise even in imagination. It is a false humility that does so. Of course it is out of proportion to us. It is the one difficulty in the gospel which haunts us through life, that we affect to regard it as too good for us, and would rather take something less. Full forgiveness now, that cost the atoning death of Jesus; glory, honour, and immortality in a future in which sin is unknown —blessings like these we are too humble to accept. But such humility is but poorly veiled pride. It

is far deeper humility which with its eye turned to God and not to self exclaims, 'He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth.'

VII

THE CONSTRAINT OF THE CROSS

THE CONSTRAINT OF THE CROSS

March 30, 1916

If there is one thing in the Christian life, as the New Testament exhibits it, which may well move us to envy, it is its unity. We know very well what dissipation and distraction are; we know what it is to be busy here and there, and to get nothing done which bears upon man's chief end. To fret against this experience only makes it worse. What we need is to open our life to that irresistible power which in strong and deep natures like St. Paul and St. John gathered up all motives and absorbed them in itself, so that they could say quite truly, This one thing I do; to me to live is Christ. It was not that their lives were without the variety and the possibilities of distraction which humiliate us. It was not that they were without the appearance of inconsistency: St. Paul was sometimes beside himself and sometimes only too sensible. But the most contrary appearances sprang from the same motive and therefore did not trouble his peace. He could always say, The love of Christ constraineth me. Constrain is a vehement, not to say a violent word. It occurs

twelve times in the Greek Testament, and in the English it is translated in no less than ten different ways. It does not, as we might think, suggest a spell or a charm, a gentle steady pressure to which we give way almost unconsciously. On the contrary, it suggests a pressure which makes the heart sore, and which it would be intolerably painful to resist.

I

Everything in Christ comes under the heading of His love in some aspect, and enters into the all-absorbing motive. His very presence in the world is to St. Paul a demonstration of His love. 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that when He was rich, for your sakes He became poor.' He looked not on His own things only—on the glory, the wealth, the blessedness of heaven; He looked on our things also—on our sin, our spiritual poverty, our helplessness and despair, and for us men and for our salvation He gave up the form of God for the form of a servant. St. Paul does not speak so much of this demonstration of Christ's love as of some others, but his words when he does speak of it are deeply felt and deeply moving, and the wonderful condescension of the Incarnation, and the love which inspired it, have appealed poignantly to the

saints. It was this more than anything which subdued and Christianised the powerful spirit of Augustine. He approached the Gospel in intellectual ways not very convincing or natural to us, but the longer he lived and the more he absorbed into his veins the story of the evangelists, the more completely was he overcome by the self-humiliation of the Son of God in love. That God should now be humble and men still proud, his heart ached to think of it, and pride and selfishness died. It was the same love which appealed so powerfully to Dr. Johnson when he burst into tears as he quoted the line of the *Dies Irae* which describes Jesus at Jacob's well: *Quaerens me sedisti lassus*, 'Seeking me, thou sat'st there weary.' And it is indeed a hard heart which contemplates this and is conscious of no constraint.

II

In the days of His flesh the love of Jesus was conspicuous in His healing ministry. We hear constantly of His being moved with compassion, and of His healing them that had need of healing. His path through the world was marked by miracles of kindness. Superficial observers might be impressed by the miraculous side of this ministry,

but that was not what impressed the evangelist. When he gathered up the whole effect of it into one word, it was that moving word originally applied to the great Sufferer in Isaiah liii. : Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Jesus did not preach about suffering, He did not tell us how to improve it for our spiritual good, He did not relieve it by the methods of science, as a physician does who stands outside of His prescriptions ; He relieved it in love, by a method which involved His personality, Himself taking our infirmities and bearing our sicknesses. There must be few who would not be better men if the constraint of this love touched them. The world is still full of suffering—was it ever fuller than to-day ?—but how many there are who never think of it, and who never in any sense bear it. He who does not feel pain, it has been said, rarely believes that it is felt. He is not concerned about relieving it. He rather justifies by his indifference the hard saying of a tender-hearted observer, that all men shun the contagion of misery. But our life is not assimilated to that of Jesus, we do not get the benefit of a heart at one with itself and with Him, until we come under the constraint of His love as a profound sympathy with all who suffer. To subscribe to the Red Cross Society is in line with

this, but it is not perfected till the kindness of God rules our hearts and lips and hands.

III

What was mainly present to St. Paul, however, when he spoke of the constraint of Christ's love was the love of the Saviour to the sinful. This love was known and felt while the Lord lived among men, undoubtedly. It drew to Him those whose sins had made them outcasts and who were sinking under the weight of a bad conscience into despair and death. There was no despair in Him. He stood among sinful men as one believing in forgiveness, proclaiming it, embodying it in His own person, bestowing it, and so restoring men to God. There is nothing that sums up His life so well as to say, This Man receiveth sinners; nothing that gives such a final conception of His love. And there is nothing that both in His own thought and in the faith of His disciples is so uniformly connected, in the last resort, with His death. It is in the outward and visible passion of His death that the passion of His love to sinners is made manifest, a passion so powerful that it subdues and absorbs into itself the whole current of the Christian's life. This is what St. Paul means when he says, The love of Christ constraineth us. One died for all

that they which live might not live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again.

IV

It probably does no injustice to the Church if we think that there has been in the last generation a certain shyness in its attitude to this central truth. Preachers have chosen texts not quite out of proportion to their abilities rather than those texts which first strike us dumb. They have hovered over the pages of their Bibles instead of being drawn down into their deep places. There is reason to hope that the war will bring us back to the simple fact of the Cross—Christ died for us. For the one great lesson of the war is the reality and the worth of sacrifice. Men are dying daily, and dying for us. We live because they die; we are redeemed by their precious blood. That is how the Bible speaks of Christ. We used to hear much of reducing Christianity to its lowest terms. We do not want it reduced to its lowest terms, but to its simplest expression. It is in its simplest expression that its magnitude appears, and it is by its magnitude it must prevail. The most wonderful words in the New Testament are inspired by the sacrifice of Jesus, and there can be no true Christianity if these words cease to be central. It is

quite true that there is no proportion whatever between what was to be seen at the Cross and what the apostles say about it; between the squalid horror of that military execution and the presence there of the power which should reconcile the world to God. But that is why we believe in it. This is the very place to cry, *Credo quia impossibile.* The apostles did not imagine the atoning power of the death of Jesus, it is too great for imagination. They did not invent it to cloak the offence of the Cross, it is too great to be a theological contrivance. No, but a new truth rose on their horizon as they looked on the perfect sacrifice of Jesus—the truth of truths, beyond all hope of telling wonderful—that sinbearing love is the supreme and final reality in the universe, and that here it is incarnate once for all. From Christ on His Cross a goodness put forth its hand and touched them which outweighed all the sin of the world and made it impotent; henceforth they believed in God *through Him.*

V

To restore the Cross to its place in Christian thought and preaching, if that be one of the blessings which attend upon the war, will surely mean also to restore it to its constraining power. It cannot

be denied that there has been such a thing known as a preaching and profession of Christianity which made an illegitimate divorce between them. Christ died for us—so the argument seemed to run—and therefore we may dismiss from our minds all the moral apprehensions that once troubled us; we are exempt from the consequences of sin which He bore in our stead. No doubt the sacrifice of Jesus annuls much for the believer: there is no condemnation to them that are in Him. No doubt also it transmutes much: when we are judged we are chastened by the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world. But merely negative ways of putting it are not adequate to Scripture. The love of Christ constraineth us, and the great sacrifice only redeems those whom it inspires. If He laid down His life for us, we also are bound to lay down our lives for the brethren. So it is put by the apostle who has the last word to say about almost everything Christian. To-day people are asking everywhere if we are worthy of the sacrifices that are being made for us hour by hour. Men have died in France and Flanders, in Gallipoli and on the Tigris and on the high seas—they have died in thousands and tens of thousands; they have been maimed and broken in hundreds of thousands; they have staked their happiness and their hopes

in millions. What for? Surely not for the merely negative result that we who are left at home may be spared what they endure. We should be unworthy to be called citizens of the country for which these men have given their lives unless their sacrifices stirred the fire of patriotism in our hearts to a purer and intenser glow and made us as willing as they to spend and be spent in the common cause. It is the same with the sacrifice of Christ. Its ultimate aim is not to exempt but to inspire. It is not only a great deliverance, but a high calling, and we lose incalculably if we separate the two. It is worth while asking whether the Church has not, in point of fact, lost greatly in its hold of the nation, because it has failed too much to illustrate the demands of the Cross—has offered no difficult careers to its members such as appeal to the heroic element in human nature, has succumbed, in short, to the temptations incident to a long period of comfort and peace, and made the Gospel too easy and too cheap. The war will bring us a true good if it puts an end to this misrepresentation of Christ, and reminds us that the rudest savage who is knocked on the head fighting the battle of his clan is nearer the Kingdom of God than the most refined and cultivated person who lives on sacrifice and makes none.

All this applies, of course, to Christians and to the Church as a whole, but it applies pre-eminently to those who have accepted a call to the Christian ministry. We do not need to go back to the parsonages in Jane Austen to find a contrast to it. Wherever the Christian Church is one of the institutions of a settled society it is possible for men to contemplate a career in it as in any other department of human activity. We may be grateful that it is not possible to aim at making a fortune in it, but this is only the crudest form of selfishness and ambition. The work of a minister can present itself in very attractive aspects. The thought of preaching constantly does not discourage a young man too much; he thinks of it as more akin than it is to teaching, and the Bible is an inexhaustible book. The pastoral relation, too, is full of the humanities which make life sweet to any humane spirit. Then there is leisure, probably, for literary or scientific pursuits not identical with those of the profession, and there is the happiness of having a home of one's own and at least conventional deference from a certain circle. That higher thoughts may mingle with such anticipations as these need not be questioned, but the mingling of higher thoughts is not enough. There is nothing here akin to the life and death of Jesus, nothing

due to the irresistible constraint of His love. But now, if ever, that is the one thing needful. A generation which has seen what ours has seen will never be moved by a life, however amiable, refined, cultured and kindly, which has not the spirit and power of sacrifice in it. The good shepherd *giveth his life* for the sheep.

VIII

SHALL HE FIND FAITH?

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April 6, 1916

THE moment the war broke out, discussion began in certain quarters of its bearing upon faith in God, and especially upon Christian faith. Sometimes such discussion indicated real perplexity, sometimes only an exaggerated sense of personal responsibility, but often a misapprehension of what faith is and of what it demands. One has read letters from young men and women in colleges whose religion, on their own showing, had gone by the board since the war began, and who would not look at it again until all that was baffling and mysterious in this tragic scene was lucidly and completely explained. We can only wonder in what transparently intelligible world these people lived before, in what world void of baffling and mysterious elements, and neatly cut and measured to the scale of their own minds. It would be a melancholy addition to the horrors of the war if it yielded a crop of juvenile sceptics who, never having been conscious of any great tension in the world before, gave up the battle of life the moment this awful tension came home to

them. If they only knew it, they ought to be grateful to God that, even through the tremendous shock of the war, He was revealing to them the nature and the necessity of faith. For it is the nature of faith to be tried, and to withstand trial; when it is justified, it is not in an academic disputation, but in the ordeal of battle. If there were no appearances against it, it would not be faith; it would be sight, which in Scripture is the precise opposite. We believe in a holy and loving God, not because all appearances favour the belief, but in spite of all appearances to the contrary; and through all contrary appearances, and ever more urgently as they are more threatening and powerful, we hear Him calling us to fight the good fight of faith, and to furnish the proofs of His being by making holiness and love the supreme realities in our life.

The present state of Europe is undoubtedly a terrible trial to faith. It makes great demands upon it, calls it to exert its whole strength. But this is what it is, a trial to faith, not an argument for unbelief. It reminds us of the impressive picture in the fourteenth Psalm in which God is represented as doing what many people seem to be doing to-day—looking for indications of His own presence in the world. He is disappointed,

just as they are disappointed when they look at the nations trying to strangle each other, and think of Zeppelin raids, and the sinking of passenger ships, and all the nameless and inevitable horrors of battle. Where is God, they say, that such things should be? Can there be a God when such things are? We can give no solution of the problem of evil—no intellectual solution, that is—whether the evil be great or small. But the conditions in which we live to-day, appalling as we must feel them to be, are the very conditions in which God looks to us to furnish to the world, in the strength of our faith, the proofs of His being, His presence and His power, which appearances conspire to flout. Faith is not an affair of solving problems, of providing explanations, of supplying logical answers to logical puzzles; it is the fighting of the good fight; it is the maintenance, in act, of the life which we know is divine in spite of all that contradicts it in the world. To do this is to do the supreme service for which humanity calls. We need not pretend to understand what is taking place. The forces at work in the war are beyond our comprehension as they are beyond our control. We do not see the issues of them nor the way in which our individual effort is related to the issues. Our bark is so small, and the ocean so vast. But we know—

and no one will persuade us that we do not know —that what God is calling for in these circumstances is witnesses, soldiers, lives and deaths; not men who will state a convincing case for faith, but men who will fight the good fight of faith; not men who will demonstrate the faith, but men who will keep the faith; not men who want evidences, but men who are evidences; men who, when the worst comes to the worst, will cast themselves into the breach and offer to Him the homage of their being. This is the great service the Church should render to the nation to-day. Immersed as men are in a conflict in which all that is spiritual might so easily be forgotten—overwhelmed with sorrows, with fears, with the sense of lawless forces that have broken loose from control—intellectually baffled and discomfited: it is for those who have known God in Christ to be true to Him through all discouragements, and to keep the lamp of faith bright in proportion as the darkness round it is deep. This is the calling and the virtue of faith.

In the full sense of the term the alternative to faith is atheism. And just as faith is practical in its self-manifestations, so is atheism. When the sense of God fades out of human life there are indications of what is happening, which may or

may not be understood by those who are concerned, but to which we ought to be alive. The Bible lays stress on these, sometimes simply as sins, sometimes in their affinity to atheism, or in their antagonism to faith. The first is timidity, or cowardice. This is the standing contrast to faith in the life of Jesus. 'How is it that ye are so fearful? Where is your faith?' It is emphasised in almost the last words of the New Testament. 'The fearful and the unbelieving' die the second death. It is attested by a very deep instinct in human nature. To glorify war as such is horrible, but the truth which makes it possible is that war is an open field for the display of courage, and that, except on the basis of courage, no other virtue can securely exist. We glorify the nation that can fight because it exhibits in naked simplicity the one virtue which can sustain all the rest. And if we wish the ideal of peace to appeal to brave and believing men, we must not present it as one in which there is no conflict and no call for devotion; the thrill with which we read of men who get the Victoria Cross for distinguished valour must not be withdrawn from life. The worst of respectable people, Voltaire says, is that they are cowards. They see their fellows wronged, and pass by on the other side. They have no

moral initiative. They hear no call in the world to action which demands courage and sacrifice. But that is the fault of comfort and respectability, and of the want of faith, not of peace; and it may be that as long as we allow peace to be corrupted by it we shall be shaken out of it at intervals by the cruel discipline of war. It is the sense of this which makes people in general have misgivings about so Christian an institution as the Peace Society, and defective sympathy, not to put it more strongly, with the conscientious objector. We feel so instinctively, and with such support from the New Testament, that without courage a man or a nation is nothing, that we have an inevitable suspicion of anything that might even remotely impair its credit.

Another mode of atheism, repudiating faith, is apathy. We all know the man whose answer to every proposal of action in the Lord's battle is, 'What 's the use? Nature is weighted against us, and nature will have the last word; it is mere waste of effort to attempt this or that.' This plea for inaction is the very thing which faith is called to fight. Nature has the last word against everything but faith. For faith is really the life of God in the soul of man, and if we have it as a grain of mustard seed it can remove mountains. In its

very nature it is creative. It is its function to call a new world into being, and if only it endures to the end nothing is impossible to it. But the apathetic man, sagacious as he may seem to be, with an experienced and despondent sagacity which never yields anything but an excuse for doing nothing, is only the slothful servant in disguise, and can never enter into the joy of his Lord.

The true character of unbelief is more nakedly revealed when it appears as insensibility to special appeals of God. There is a vivid illustration of this in Isaiah, the application of which to a considerable section of our own nation at the present time it would be difficult to decline. 'In that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping and to mourning, and to baldness and to girding with sackcloth; and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.' The moral recklessness here depicted is to be seen in every city in the country. Our casualties in the war must now be over 600,000; the deaths alone about a quarter of that total: could there be a more moving call from Almighty God to the heart of the nation? But in 1915 the drink bill increased by seventeen and a half millions, and in

spite of national necessities and the divine appeal they brought, a vast population lived on in the same degrading self-indulgence as in times of peace. The sheer godlessness of this on the part of those who live in it and profit by it, the apathy of the mass of the nation which simply looks on, the cowardice and impotence of the Government and the legislature in face of such an evil, impeach us all of atheism, and are ominous of the future. It is of precisely this national condition that the prophet cries: 'It was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die.' The drink trade as it is carried on in this country, with its moral fruits, is a trial to faith as hard as all that has happened in Belgium and Poland, in Serbia and Armenia; and if there is faith left in the Church as a grain of mustard seed, it must cast its whole strength into the battle against it, or cease to speak as if it believed in God.

If there is a degree of unbelief worse than this moral insensibility—and how can there be if this is an unpardonable sin?—it may be found in that contempt and defiance of God which does think of Him, but thinks He can be disregarded. This is the character which the Bible calls the fool. The fool is not the simpleton, but rather the *esprit*

fort. He thinks he can make himself his chief end, and be a law to himself in achieving it. All that he can do he may do; his might is his right. He does not recognise that there is something in the world which is not pliable to any human will, something which no man can borrow and bend to his own purposes, something which will surely use all men, not excepting him, for its own exaltation and glory: the moral order established and maintained by God. He does not recognise this till he is broken on it, and then it is too late. It is this supreme form of unbelief, this impious contempt of God and of the faith of the wronged in God, which declares itself unblushingly in the conception of 'frightfulness.' The Germans are to get their own way by a line of action in which all considerations of humanity are trampled on, and the moral order ignored. It is atheism *in excelsis.* But He that is higher than the highest regardeth. And the highest calling of faith at this moment, the final proof we can give that we are believing men, is to strike with all our might on the Lord's side in the Lord's battle.

IX

CONSCIENCE

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July 13, 1916

Conscience is, no doubt, one of the things which are best understood when they are simply taken for granted, but all such things compel examination sooner or later. The conscientious objectors to military service, who have been so much in evidence lately, have provoked a good deal of reflection on the subject. A disinterested observer would probably come to the conclusion that law, which is the expression of the common conscience, ought not to make the individual conscience a court of appeal against itself. If a man's conscience compels him to oppose the law, let him do so and take the consequences; that is the straightforward path, and has been the path of saints and martyrs from the beginning. It is quite another thing to ask that when the conscience of the nation calls for compulsory military service the private citizen shall be entitled to contract himself out of the law by holding up his hand and saying 'Conscience.' This is asking the law to annul itself. Nominally a law to compel military service, it leaves the nation really with nothing but volunteer recruits. For

anybody can hold up his hand and say 'Conscience,' and nobody can find out whether he is sincere or insincere in doing so. He might just as well be exempted for saying 'Mum' or 'Budget.' A great deal of pity has been lavished on the unintelligent and unsympathetic treatment of objectors by the tribunals. Some pity might have been spared for the tribunals set to administer an impossible, because a self-contradictory law. But this by the way.

Even those who place the authority of conscience highest must admit that it is not infallible. It may be enlightened or unenlightened; it may be tender or seared; it may be simple, or scrupulous, or sophisticated; it may be a clear light from heaven, or it may have sunk into such complete subjection to interests that, like an unregulated and unprotected compass, pointing anywhere but to the pole, it serves only to mislead. Our Lord states the appalling supposition: If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

I

The Bible provides startling illustrations of this dimming or extinction of conscience. It is revealed in unusual degrees of wickedness, which are accordingly pronounced unpardonable. Sometimes these

are connected with religion. Conscience is dead when the minister of religion is insincere, and finds in his calling only a living, or a sphere for the indulgence of sensuality or pride :

> 'When the priest
> Turns atheist, as did Eli's sons, who filled
> With lust and violence the house of God.'

It is of such a foul decay of conscience that Revelation tells us, 'it shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.' Sometimes it is signalised by a defiant contempt of God. There are times when to every unsophisticated conscience the voice of God is very audible and unmistakably plain. We have passed through such times ourselves in the last two years if never before. To be insensible to the voice which speaks through them is evidence of a conscience which has ceased to function, and of a moral state which provokes judgment without mercy. When the Lord of Hosts calls for weeping and mourning, and sees instead joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine—not only business, but pleasure, as usual, or more reckless than usual—what can He say but 'This iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die'? And if it is bad to defy God by such lawless disregard, it shows an even more

desperate condition of conscience malignantly to misinterpret His presence—to call evil good and good evil, to invent bad motives for good actions, to ascribe the gracious works done by God through His children to an inspiration of Satanic origin, to say He casteth out devils by Beelzebub. Here conscience is totally lost, and for such a sin our Lord tells us there is no forgiveness, neither in this world nor in that which is to come.

II

But there is another aspect of the subject. If conscience can degenerate and die, it can also grow ; and if inexorable judgments are pronounced on its perversion and decay, extraordinary allowances are made for its ignorance and immaturity. Few things in the Bible are so wonderful as Jesus' prayer for His murderers: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. How could ignorance, or an unenlightened conscience, be pleaded for those who brought Jesus to the Cross ? They all knew something, and some of them much. Pilate knew He was innocent, and that he himself was betraying his trust as a guardian of justice. Caiaphas knew that he had sought false witness against Him. The crowd knew that He had gone about doing good. They were variously and

deeply guilty. But they did not know everything. They did not know who He was, nor the meaning and mystery of His death. There was a degree of ignorance in their consciences for which the responsibility was not wholly theirs, and therefore their sin, though awful, was not unpardonable. Repentance could still be preached to them, and the hope of forgiveness held out. Conscience might rise through these experiences to a truer verdict on its own past, and a higher responsibility for its own future.

This is a truth which history gives us much occasion to apply, and it will be our happiness if we can find the applications of it which our own time requires. Even Christendom has had its dark ages, its times of ignorance which God winked at, full of phenomena which He tolerated though He could not but condemn them, but all the time there has been a stirring of conscience, under His spirit, to repentance and amendment, and it is the hope of nations when this inward unrest declares itself by corresponding action.

Two hundred years ago the Treaty of Utrecht was signed which closed the long war illumined by the genius of Marlborough. Among the few parts of the peace, Lecky tells us, which appear to have given unqualified and unanimous satisfaction at

home was the Assiento contract, which made England the great slave-trader of the world. Such was the English conscience then. How it was enlightened it is not easy to tell. Horace Walpole was no saint, yet within a generation afterwards he wrote to his friend, Horace Mann: 'We have been sitting this fortnight on the African company: *we*, the British Senate, that temple of liberty and bulwark of Protestant Christianity, have this fortnight been pondering methods to make more effectual that horrid traffic of selling negroes. It has appeared to us that six and forty thousand of these wretches are sold every year to our plantations alone!—it chills one's blood. I would not have to say that I voted in it for the continent of America!' This was only one voice, but conscience on the subject was born, and though it took two generations longer to win over the nation, it won it over so completely that most Britons have no sense of ever having had any relation to slavery except that of abolishing it. They do not remember that England was once the great slave-trader of the world. Perhaps if they did they might have misgivings that there can be other slaves than negroes, and other enforcements of slavery than the chain and the lash. But this apart, we can see that a vast if not a

complete enlightenment of conscience has taken place on one subject, and may hope for its extension to others.

III

At this moment there is crying need for its extension to the trade in intoxicating liquors. The facts about the trade are not unknown, but they have only reached the intelligence, not the conscience. Yet it is only through an enlightened conscience that the meaning of the facts, and the motives they involve, will reach the intelligence. Everybody knows what a public-house is. Everybody knows that its influence is one which acts against all influences which are operating for the health, the wealth, and the moral progress of society. No man or woman becomes richer, stronger, better or happier by frequenting the public-house; it is as certain as mathematics that the public-house, as it exists among us, undermines health, wrecks homes, saps character, is the fruitful parent of misery, poverty and crime. The common sale of strong drink has bred and continues to breed in the community a vast population—this is not putting it too strongly—in which the moral nature is as good as dead. It forms a great sodden morass at the bottom of the social

structure, a dismal swamp in which every form of vice and impotence festers, and into which every public-house in the country sends its contributory rill. There is not one of them which has not moral tragedy wrought into its very being. The drink trade is more terrible than the slave trade. It is more terrible than the war, for it is absolutely unredeemed by one flash of the heroism which can make us think proudly of the war through all its horrors. A hundred years ago nobody thought much of these things. Fifty years ago conscience was born and enlightenment began. Now the times of ignorance are past for many, and are rapidly passing for all. Holders of brewery shares, the *Spectator* tells us, would be content rather to have their investments elsewhere. Publicans who have made money are pleased to divert their sons to law or medicine, or some unimpeachable line of commerce. Great nations, like France and Russia, have faced the drink trade as Britain did the slave trade, and even a Government like ours, which makes £50,000,000 a year by it, has been visited with doubts as to whether it would not be richer if it sacrificed the £50,000,000 and shut the public-house door. No man can to-day be on this question as most men were two generations ago. Then the sin inseparable from the maintenance of the public-

house system—which is not the affair of publicans only, but of the nation—was in some sense a sin of ignorance. It was pardonable, and God called all men everywhere to repent. Now, if the nation goes on sinning, it is with its eyes open, and nothing can avert its doom. Whatever be the method, every atom of conscience cries for the suppression of a system the fruits of which are those of the public-house in our country.

Speaking practically, conscience is the power of putting ourselves in the place of others, and feeling things as they feel them. In other words, it is a form of love. It is best educated by the exercise of love; it is this by which it is enlightened and expanded. But where it is not educated by love it not infrequently gets the harder discipline of revolt. Those into whose situation and feelings others do not enter are inevitably wronged, and inevitably resent their wrongs. The one constant phenomenon of political life from the dawn of history to the present day is the tension between classes of society whose interests conflict, the tug-of-war between the rich and the poor. It is easy to say that in a tug-of-war between two classes equally selfish conscience has no interest; it does not matter to it which side wins. It is easy to argue with Dr. Johnson that subordination adds to the

happiness of mankind. The fact remains that the world is ill-divided, and this fact is entering, partly through love and partly through revolt, into the conscience even of those who have got far more than their share. At the present stage of the age-long conflict the assailants are stronger than they ever were, because there is a secret voice which pleads for them in the hearts of the assailed. Conscience is growing in spite of all the interests that are antagonistic to it—it is growing indirectly as a result of the war—and when it has power as it has right it will command the world.

X

CHRIST'S VISITATION OF THE CHURCHES

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The national mission of repentance and hope projected by the Church of England must command the sympathy of Christians whatever their denomination. Called forth by the special circumstances of the time, it is nevertheless appropriate enough at any time; indeed, the earliest visitation of the Churches by Christ Himself—that visitation the piercing record of which is preserved in the seven epistles in the Book of Revelation—might be described by this very name. Its watchwords are repentance and hope. It shows us where Christ's interest in the Churches lies, and what we should look to if we would be prepared to welcome Him.

I

The Lord appreciates all that is good and true in the Church. His eyes are as a flame of fire, and out of His mouth goes a sharp two-edged sword, but there is no disparagement of the Churches, no sneering depreciation of what they are or of what they have done. When He says,

as He does to all of them, I know thy works, it is in the tone of appreciation. 'I know thy works, and thy toil, and thy patience. Thou hast borne for My sake, and hast not grown weary. I know thy works, and the last to be more than the first.' There are probably few Churches in which there are not those who need and deserve this encouragement. Most people who are trying to do Christian work have candid friends as well as watchful enemies, and it is good for them to remember that they have an all-seeing and sympathetic Lord. They need not be discouraged if they are alive to His presence. Their work may be laborious or not visibly fruitful, or not much noticed by man, but it is noticed by Him. The spiritual qualities it exhibits are specially noticed. The Lord does not say, I know thy works—the large congregations gathered, the great collections contributed, the public influence exercised; but, I know thy works —thy love, thy faith, thy patience. And in trying times patience has the palm. The Gospel is called by the Risen Lord 'the word of My patience'; the supreme Christian virtue is to hold out bravely and steadfastly till the end. Patience in the New Testament is not so passive a word as it is with us. With us it is more akin to resignation, putting up with what we cannot better; in the New Testa-

ment it is more akin to courage, constancy, loyalty. It is not the quality of those who are wearily waiting at home for the war to end, because there is nothing else they can do; it is the quality the French have shown for the last five months at Verdun. Our Lord takes note of it with joy when it is manifested in the Church. When we keep His flag flying in the face of opposition, in village churches or in city mission halls, and when nothing can make us haul it down, we serve a gracious and all-seeing Master who is not unrighteous to forget.

II

The Lord is alive to the faults and failures of the Church. He knows our works when they are perfunctory, vainglorious and ineffective. He knows when they are not fulfilled—that is, not done completely or thoroughly as they should be done—in God's sight. He knows when they are pretentious and unreal, when the Church is in evidence, so to speak, but not in power; and it is then His call to repent is most urgent, and that ominous tones are heard in His voice.

Particular places and persons will have their own reflections to make, but what our Lord found to censure in all the Churches of Asia is undoubtedly the most prevalent weakness of the Churches in

our own country at this day. 'Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam.' The special form this took in the first century need not concern us. It was not a speculative but a practical doctrine. It tended to compromise the Church with the pagan world around it, and to destroy its character as the representative of a higher and purer life for men such as the world could not produce and did not want. This is the standing peril of Christianity. It is a peril to which all Churches tend to succumb, especially when they have to live their life in a complicated and luxurious society. The natural man, by a healthy instinct, dislikes Puritanism, and suspects the too self-conscious nonconforming conscience. He thinks they are inevitably Pharisaic. The Christian man naturally wishes to avoid such odious suspicion—for it is odious to be a Pharisee—and is drawn by this wish to tolerate things which are certainly not characteristically Christian. But the Church must be a society in which the level of goodness and purity is higher than it is outside, or it has no right to be. It is the Lord Himself who says to His disciples, What do ye more than others? And His own example is the final proof that this *plus* can be realised without the faintest trace of Pharisaism. That, in short, is the moral problem

of the Church: to represent something which is ethically higher than anything represented by the world, and yet to do it, not in a Pharisaic, but in an unconscious and redemptive spirit. A Church which is lost in the world loses all power to evangelise. Why should men come into it if it stands for nothing which is not equally within their reach outside? When we think of appealing to the world in Jesus' name, His call comes to us with inevitable force, Come out from among them and be ye separate. It is a radically false policy which thinks to win the world by meeting it half-way, or by finding common ground on which to form an accommodation with it. The Church lives and renews itself simply and solely by that which is inexorable, uncompromising, unmodifiable in its life and message. When it forgets this and tries to win the world by concession, there may in some cases be the appearance of success, but it is only the appearance. The real result is that which our Lord saw at Sardis: Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. The wheels went round with imposing regularity, but they had no bite on anything, and nothing was done. The Church was full, but the Spirit did not descend; the praises were sung, but no one's heart glowed; the prayers were said, but there was no answering

presence of God; the Gospel was preached, and no knee bowed at the name of Jesus. In how many churches, throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles, must the voice be heard, Repent and do the first works; begin again at the beginning with what is distinctively and unmistakably of Christ, and not of the world—if we are to look to the future with hope.

III

When our Lord visits the Churches, He takes note of the difficulties under which their work is done. 'I know where thou dwellest, where Satan's seat is.' Satan's seat in the first century was at Pergamum, where stood the splendid temple of Æsculapius the Saviour, the great God of healing. It was in this respect the Lourdes of antiquity, and thousands flocked to it annually from all quarters of the Mediterranean world to be cured, as they do now to the Catholic shrine in the Pyrenees. In the same city stood the first temple of Rome and the Emperor, representing what to the Book of Revelation was the most direct and dreadful antagonism to Christ. It was not easy to be a Christian there—Antipas had already died for it; but a handful of Christians, no doubt everywhere spoken against, were loyal even in

the face of this overwhelming and insolent paganism. It is like our Lord, we may reverently say, that in His message to this tried but steadfast Church He twice refers to its constancy 'where Satan's seat is.'

There is hardly a more encouraging word than this in the Bible, nor one the encouragement of which is more widely wanted in a visitation of the Churches to-day. Great numbers of ministers and of Churches are disheartened by the enormous power of the forces arrayed against them. They have so much to contend with that is utterly beyond their strength. There are vested interests of iniquity, like the liquor trade; there are gambling and impurity; there are social conditions, alleged by some as the cause, and by others as the effect of these and similar evils, which deprive the Gospel of any chance of success; there may be a Secularist lecture hall beside the church, or a depot of the Rationalist press, seducing the uneducated, or prejudicing them against the truth. Often discouragement takes the form of wishing for a change, or thinking one could do the Lord's work better anywhere else. If the minister had a West End church instead of a down-town one, how much more efficient his ministry would be! At all events, how much easier and less exacting it would

be! But that is not so certain. It is not the teaching of Jesus that it is easier for the rich to go into the kingdom of God than for the poor. It is not manifest that Satan's seat is in one quarter of the city and not another. It may be where there is a public-house at every corner, and a low music-hall corrupting the neighbourhood in the next street; but it may also be where there is nothing but luxury and comfort, and where people are immersed in the pride and ambition or in the pleasures and seductions of the world. What does it matter where it is if, as we face our task with courage and loyalty, we hear our Lord's voice come to us: I know where thou dwellest, where Satan's seat is, and I have set before thee an open door, and thou hast a little strength? A little strength with a loyal heart can make head against Satan on his throne.

IV

One thing our Lord never omits to do when He visits the Churches: He sets before them all, even before dead Sardis and lukewarm Laodicea, the reward which awaits faithful service. If He begins with I know thy works, He ends with To Him that overcometh. The life of the Church is a conflict, but it is one which ought to end in victory. It may not, indeed it cannot, be an easy

or a bloodless victory, for it is part of the victory which was achieved at the Cross. But those who are companions in the tribulation and patience of Jesus will be companions also in His kingdom. Sometimes we can hardly tell what the promises made to the victors mean, but that is because eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart conceived all that God has prepared for them that love Him. They fall on our ears not like plain prose, but like broken snatches of heavenly music, fragments of what Paul heard in Paradise, things that it is not possible for a man to utter. 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life. He shall not be hurt of the second death. I will give him to eat of the hidden manna. He shall be clothed in white raiment. I will give him the morning star. I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God. I will give him to sit with Me on My throne.' All these words of unimaginable glory and beauty were spoken originally to Churches that had faults as well as merits, that needed searching rebuke as well as consolation, and that were called to repentance as well as to hope. Be ye steadfast, they say to us still, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

XI

AFTER THE WAR

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At a time when no one can see the end of the war it may well seem premature to spend thought on what is to come after it, yet it is evident that the future is appealing strongly to the imagination and conscience of many of our countrymen. Great agonies are often relieved thus by great hopes. A bow shines in the cloud over every deluge. Prophetic inspiration reached its highest point in the vision of the New Covenant which rose on Jeremiah's horizon when Babylon had trodden Israel into the dust. The world's great age began anew for the most humane of ancient poets as the flood of civil war ebbed from the face of the Roman Empire. Kindred anticipations are striving in men's minds at the present time: how are we to regard them?

Often we hear it said that after the war nothing will be the same. The soldiers will come back in a new mood, with new thoughts, new political, religious and social interests, a new impatience with what is effete and ineffective, which will make short work with much that was too long tolerated. The Church and the State alike had

better prepare for surprises. This is easy talk, and has little substance in it. It is just as true to say that after the war everything will be the same. No shock really upsets the equilibrium of the world ; there may be a considerable but only a transient disturbance ; things will settle down again, and the centre of gravity will not be too far from the old point. Human nature will be the same. The law of God will be the same. The inconsistencies of a being, conscious of a spiritual calling but with roots descending into the dark places of nature, will be the same. Man's glory and his shame, his hope and his despair, his pride and his need of God will be the same. What is more, the Gospel with which God comes to meet him will be the same. And the Church, whose special calling it is to represent the changeless interests of eternity in the stream of time, must not be excited too easily by the cry that everything is going to be different. She will have to witness to the same truth, though it may be with a new sense of its scope and a new fidelity to its moral implications.

I

There is always a danger, in times of excitement, of accepting ideas which owe their existence merely to a reaction. In such ideas there is apt to be

falsehood as well as truth; they are not merely due to a reaction, they are often in the bad sense reactionary. For example, we are hearing perpetually that before the war this country was dangerously dependent on Germany for commodities which were vital to its industries and even to its existence, and such dependence, it is assumed quite naturally, must come to an end. We do not quarrel with the inference, and express no opinion about the economic devices by which our independence is to be secured. But every humane and Christian spirit must protest against the temper in which the change in our economic position after the war is being preached and contemplated by many of those who support it. It is advocated not as a necessary measure of self-defence, but as if it were a positive ideal that the British Empire should be a world by itself, a little globe within the great globe, living and moving in a splendid isolation, selling to everybody and buying from nobody. It is little to say that this is not the way of peace and good will; it is as wicked as it is unintelligent. It ignores the elementary truth that God has made men and nations to be members of each other, and mutually interdependent as contributing in common to His Kingdom. The imperialism of the ancient world was the deification of Rome, and

that is what the Book of Revelation regards as Antichrist. The deification of the British Empire would be just as bad, yet it has eloquent prophets in political and commercial life. The Church may have to fight this Antichrist after the war, and to make it plain that no detestation of Germany justifies this insane pride of independence. The crimes of Germany do indeed make it difficult to think of being on a friendly footing with her within any time we shall live to see. When we think of Belgium and Serbia, of Scarborough and the *Lusitania*, of Miss Cavell and Captain Fryatt, we feel that to condone such things would be as infamous as to commit them. God forgives His sinful creatures only on condition of sincere penitence, unreserved confession, and unconditional surrender, and on no other terms could any Christian people be reconciled to a nation which had such crimes at its door. But our present relations to Germany are not permanent, and to make an ideal, in which we exult, out of a necessity imposed on us by the malice and ambition of our enemies, is no mark of wise or good men. The ideal truth is that the more all nations are dependent on each other the more truly they constitute the one family of God on earth, and even after the war this is the ideal we must maintain.

II

Questions not less critical arise in connection with our internal relations, especially in the industrial arena. The tension between capital and labour was pronounced even before the war; the incessant and embittered wrangle filled the newspapers and absorbed the interest both of the classes and the masses. But the war revealed it in an ugliness and intensity of which many had had no idea. It became apparent, when national needs called for the control of certain industries, and interference with the customs and conditions under which they were carried on, that employers and employed were living in an atmosphere of preternatural suspicion and hatred which was indistinguishable from civil war, and was not only as perilous to the nation as the war on the Continent, but morally degrading, because unredeemed by the heroism which has been so conspicuous in the field. How are we to contemplate this state of affairs after the war? What, in particular, has the Christian Church to say to it? To enter the atmosphere of suspicion is to become suspect oneself, and we know that the Church has been suspected. The working classes, we are told, have

left it because it has shown no sympathy with their interests. Rich men also have withdrawn their subscriptions from it because ministers have made speeches which were only too sympathetic with such interests. Perhaps these opposite charges cancel each other and show that the Church has been more impartial than any of its critics admit. But it is not enough for the Church to be impartial. Impartiality is for legislators and judges ; God has committed to the Church the word and the ministry of reconciliation. Fundamentally the question at issue in all the strife of classes is the question of equality. It may seem to be a merely economic question, concerned with the distribution of the fruits of labour ; but what gives passion to it and makes it uncompromising is the sense that what is at stake in it is the title of all men, whether they live on wages or on profits, to have their manhood recognised on the same terms. The war, it cannot be questioned, is here on the side of those who are striving for recognition. Though an army is a hierarchy, and is strong only through a discipline which cannot be questioned, it is also essentially socialising ; it levels up and levels down ; the highest and the lowest in it wear the same uniform, and they are at one in it in a way which has no parallel in the domain of industry. There is only

one way in which the Church can promote the work of reconciliation in the economic sphere. It is not by officially interfering in trade disputes the moral responsibilities of which can only be undertaken by those to whom they belong. It is by preaching the equality of men as all made in the same divine image, redeemed by the same divine sacrifice, and called to the same divine destiny. It is by eliminating from its own life the spirit which denies equality and cultivates the rich rather than the poor. It is by an absolutely disinterested ministry, which not only speaks of a life which does not depend on the abundance of the things a man possesses, but indubitably and unimpeachably lives that life before all men. It will not be a popular ministry. It is never popular, either with rich or poor, to teach that man shall not live on bread alone, but on the word of God. It is never popular, either with rich or poor, to ask, What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose himself? For both rich and poor, in the main, are seeking the world. But it is only a spirit which has assimilated these unpopular truths which can create the atmosphere in which even economic reconciliation becomes possible; and it is only a signally disinterested Christian ministry, devoting itself unmistakably to what is divine in all men,

that can contribute to the creation of such a spirit.

III

If there is one subject more than another which is arresting attention and exciting hopes and anxieties it is the position of woman after the war. That it has for the time been profoundly affected by the war no one can deny. Without the service of women the war could never have been carried on. Apart from the works of mercy, which seem peculiarly their province, they have undertaken whole fields of labour once occupied by men. In hundreds of thousands they have achieved what is called economic independence. We see them in the fields, on the railways, on the tramcars, in the banks, and in all kinds of public places, as well as in munition works. Vast inferences are freely drawn from this—political, economical, and even moral. Probably we had better hold our judgment with regard to these much in reserve. Certainly we should not form any ideal which is determined by the conditions of the hour, for our ideals must rest on what is natural and normal, and the whole conditions of the hour, as they affect the position of woman, are thoroughly abnormal. We do not want to see them perpetuated, but to see them

disappear with the least possible friction. It is abnormal that millions of men should be out of the country, and that the heavy work they once did should now be done by women, and we want to see the men back and natural conditions restored. Human society rests essentially and for ever on the basis of the family, and the normal career of man and woman is to grow up to be husband and wife, father and mother, the foundation of a family. Of course there will always be exceptions, and one of the disastrous results of the war is that the exceptions among women will be multiplied. Before peace comes the women in England may exceed the men by a million and a half. But while the exceptions are allowed for, the ideal must not be constructed by reference to them, but by reference to the rule. Family life is the normal career for normal human beings, and it is with the family in view that all our ideals and all our legislation must be determined. It is curious that some women should think this specially hard upon them. It is particularly curious to be told almost in the same breath that child life is the greatest of national assets and that it is insulting and degrading to woman to suggest that marriage and motherhood are her normal career. They are her normal career only in the sense in which marriage and

fatherhood are the normal career of man. It is a career with economical consequences on both sides, if we choose to put it so. But it is through their acceptance on both sides that human nature in man and woman comes to its full wealth and perfect stature, and, however loud the exceptions may cry, we may be pretty confident that here nature will have the last word. It is a crucial case in which the foolishness of God is wiser than man —or woman either.

IV

Much has been said of what the returning army will require from the Church. Unhappily the great bulk of the army never had anything to do with the Church, and is quite likely to return as indifferent as it went away. But men who have been face to face with death may well have had their sense of reality quickened, and if they come in contact with the Church will want to hear an intelligible and unambiguous voice. They will have in this desire the sympathy of many who have never left home. Perhaps religion had been too much intellectualised, and the protests against this were justified. But under the influence of pragmatism, the recent tendency has been all the other way, and the ordinary hearer begins to

doubt whether the Church has a definite message at all. He has heard enough of the Gospel as sublime, consoling, inspiring, beautiful; what he wants to hear is something which has the primary radical virtue of being true. He wants to know the ultimate realities, the facts and laws of the eternal world with which he will have to settle in the last Judgment. If the Church prepares for anything after the war it should prepare with open mouth and unveiled face to manifest the truth of its message to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

XII

PROHIBITION

PROHIBITION [1]

February 27, 1916

'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.'—Ps. lxvi. 18.

This text is so plain that it needs no explanation and no proof. We all know that in our intercourse with God the first requisite is sincerity. There must be no wrong thing in our life that we are determined not to let go; there must be no secret purpose that we dare not avow in our prayers. If we wish God to be on our side, we must be unreservedly on His side. If we pray with our hand over something with which He is not to interfere, with our eye glancing sideways to something which He is not to see, we are regarding iniquity in our heart, and He will not hear us. We are mocking God, and God is not mocked.

At this moment there is one prayer in which the whole soul of our nation might well be concentrated. It is the prayer for victory in the war—such a victory as will establish in perpetuity the

[1] Preached under the auspices of the Scottish Temperance League.

reign of righteousness, liberty, and peace. We all pray it daily and hourly. It rises in every church, in every intercession meeting, in every Christian home, from every pious heart. Is there anything which obstructs it, and keeps God from hearing? Is it possible for us, unconsciously, to regard sin in our hearts, and so defeat our own intercessions?

We may do so if our interest in victory is pitched too low. It can hardly be denied that there are people whose main feeling about the war is one of resentment that it has disturbed a life with which they were tolerably content. It was not a noble or generous life; it had no spiritual purpose in it, no sense of a high calling, no devotion to ends transcending self. Nevertheless they want it back again. Their one interest in the defeat of the national enemy is simply to get it back. If peace were signed they would relapse, as far as circumstances permitted, to the very same life out of which the war has shaken them. The same practical forgetfulness of God, the same indifference to the common good, the same self-centred devotion to pleasure, the same contempt for the things of the soul, would resume the upper hand. But can we think that God is bringing us through the terrible experience of the war only to leave us where we were before? Is it to teach us nothing? Is

it to give us no new thoughts about our life? Are we to get no new sense of what gives life its value, of what constitutes man's chief end, of how a nation has spiritual responsibilities, and a place to fill and a work to do in the kingdom of God? Is the blood of all the brave men who have died for us in France and Flanders, in Gallipoli and on the Tigris and on the high seas, to do nothing to quicken our consciences to serve a living God? We dare not think so. We dare not think that God is bringing us through fire and through water except to purify and exalt our national life somehow; and prayer cannot be heard if it comes from a heart which secretly resists this purification and uplifting, and clings obstinately in desire to things unworthy of God.

Again, we regard iniquity in our hearts when we pray for victory, if we have a secret satisfaction that we are after all making our own out of the war, and that the victory is to be won rather for us than by us. We know that people are sometimes the victims of circumstances, and see things for which they have no responsibility turning out, amid the confusions and disorders of a time like this, to their advantage; but it is an advantage which a simple heart would rather be spared. In the inflated profits of some men, and the inflated

wages of others, at a time when the whole community is impoverishing itself in a struggle for life, there is something both inhuman and unholy which cannot but be displeasing to God. It is certainly displeasing to Him when those to whom war brings prosperity can let their minds dwell on it without misgiving. And when they glory in it, when the sudden accession of wealth is displayed in pride and self-indulgence and folly, it is not possible to come to God with prayers which He will hear. Put away, He cries, the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes. Be loyal to the common good. Be loyal to those who are ruined by the war. Be loyal to those who are laying down their lives for you—lives for which no money is any price—and then come and offer your prayer to Me.

The condition of sincerity and disinterestedness in prayer—the obligation laid on us, when we appeal to God for anything, to put ourselves wholeheartedly right with Him in all that touches the fulfilment of our request—is forced upon us by the circumstances in which we meet to-night. We are in the crisis of a great war, in which the life of our nation and the highest hopes of the human race are at stake. We long for victory with unutterable longing. But there is one con-

spicuous and disabling wickedness in the national life with which the national conscience seems reluctant to deal—I mean the sin of intemperance, and the sin of maintaining that whole traffic from which intemperance is inseparable, and by which it is nursed and perpetuated from one generation to another. What right has the nation to pray if it is tender to an iniquity like this? Will God hear our cry for victory if we look on while the most powerful ally of our enemy is encamped in every village of our country, and in almost every street of our cities, and refuse to lift a finger to dislodge him? Do not believe it: God is not mocked.

I have spoken of this as a regarding of iniquity on the national scale, but we must acknowledge, as we do with joy and gratitude, that the supreme representative of the nation has not failed in his duty. When His Majesty the King, near the beginning of the war, made total abstinence from intoxicants the rule both for himself and his household, he showed an adequate sense of the national peril and of the necessity of dealing drastically with it, and he set a noble example which challenged imitation on the part of his loyal subjects. It is humiliating to reflect that it produced so little effect. Neither the House of

Commons nor the Town Council of Glasgow could fall in with the expressed wish of the King. What is much more serious, neither showed as a body any sense of the fact that the question is one which is vast and vital to the nation. It was treated as if it were a trifle, to be disposed of with jests and laughter. But the Parliament or the Council which can contemplate the liquor traffic and its consequences in this country except with horror and fear, and the most solemn sense of an overwhelming responsibility, has forfeited its title either to be respected by men or to be heard by God. The war has made intemperance more alarming, but it has not made it more dangerous. God's voice is more audible and more urgent because of the war, but it is not more menacing. In war and peace alike we provoke the eyes of His glory with all that drunkenness means in the national life, and till the nation takes its responsibility for it seriously, our prayers will be in vain. 'Woe unto our souls, for we have rewarded evil unto ourselves.'

Even in an assembly like this I will venture to dwell on the obvious facts—they are all obvious, if only they were impressive. We depend for victory, in the last resort, on strength—on mere physical health and vigour—and it does not need

to be proved that intemperance saps the constitution and drains its strength away. In all our great cities we have districts in which vitality is low and the death-rate high, and everywhere these are the districts in which public-houses abound. In all we have liquor-sodden slums, and we allow them to exist—we allow this pitiful sediment of human life, or what should be human life, to accumulate at the very basis of our society—and then we pray for victory. It is a good many years now since one of our statesman asked us to consider whether an imperial race could be bred in the conditions in which hundreds of thousands of our fellow-citizens grew up, but though the answer is plain, the response of conscientious action is still to come. There are, of course, people who say that the question of the slum has little to do with drink, or that it is not so much the effect as the cause of intemperance. There are people who will say anything. But I venture to say without fear of contradiction that the housing problem and the liquor problem will never be solved separately, and that no victory can be won in the war or beyond it till conscience reacts with a new energy on both. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us.

It is another aspect of the same truth to say that

victory depends on moral strength : it goes to the nation which has the higher character : which has the greater self-mastery, the greater self-discipline, the greater power in its individual members of subordinating themselves to the common good. It is one of the most palpable and frightful consequences of the liquor traffic as it is carried on in this country, that masses of the population have sunk under it to a level at which the moral nature is practically extinct. No thought of duty, conscience, or honour touches them. We have had some extraordinary spectacles, since the war began, of politicians ' appealing ' to the intemperate classes to exercise temperance, to work hard, to practise thrift, for their own good and for the good of the nation. One wonders whether these sanguine pleaders ever think of the appeals that the intemperate have already resisted. If a man will not be sober out of self-respect—if he will not be sober for the sake of his wife and children—if he resists the tenderest appeals of natural affection—is he expected to become a new man when he is appealed to by politicians who have been accustomed to flatter and cajole him, and are now perhaps a little disposed to bully him ? There is no hope there. There is no hope at all unless we can help these unhappy people to recover the moral strength

they have lost, and put them into conditions in which their moral nature will get a chance to come to life again. The only way to do that is to make drinking impossible. It is not as if the number were few. It may not be a high proportion of the whole population, but it is great enough to disorganise whole departments of our social life, and it is being recruited every day in Glasgow by the one thousand seven hundred and fifty-five shops which are licensed to sell strong drink in the city. One of the most touching sentences in a report on the prohibition of vodka in Russia ran thus: 'They themselves could not have stopped drinking.' We have a vast population that cannot stop drinking. The moral pith has gone out of them. But it might be restored if we helped them to stop in the one possible way, by completely prohibiting the sale of intoxicants. Till we do, we are breeding moral incapables: a race that has no self-mastery and can never have mastery in any conflict; and when we persist in this policy and pray for victory, I say again we are mocking God.

Again, we are told continually, and told most truly, that success in this war depends upon our industrial strength. It depends on the efficiency with which all those services are carried on in which

not only the war in the narrowest sense, but the whole business of the country is involved. It depends on the efficiency of shipbuilding and engineering, of gun-making and shell-making, of coal-mining and of the transport service in all its branches by land and sea. It requires the concentration on all these varied operations of the unimpaired energies of the nation. It needs no proof that drink is here our worst enemy. It has been recognised as such by all who are in contact with the facts. It has been recognised not only by people with a prior interest in temperance, not only by men whose businesses would be more profitable and more easily managed if intemperance disappeared; it has been recognised by statesmen responsible for the carrying on of the war. And what did they do? For one brief delusive moment it seemed as though they were about to face their responsibility in God's sight, but the moment passed. The task was too much for them, and they shuffled off their responsibility on to a Liquor Control Board, as though *it* could develop the courage and the conscience in which the supreme executive of the country had failed. The Liquor Control Board has confessed what every intelligent person could have foretold, that its regulations to restrain excessive drinking have

in this part of the country, at all events, produced no adequate effect. The people who are to be affected are people who will drink all they drink now—who will lose all the time they lose now—who will disorganise the work of others to the same extent to which they do now—if the public-houses are open only one hour in twenty-four. What are the Board afraid of that they do not adopt the one policy which will undoubtedly increase industrial efficiency—a policy urged on them not by temperance zealots, but by the Licensing Authority of Glasgow—the policy of making drunkenness impossible while the war lasts? Are they afraid of the people whose money is in the trade? Are they afraid of the people who will drink if drink is within their reach, whatever be the consequences? I do not believe they need fear either. The policy of a great nation fighting for its life is not going to be dictated either by the selfishness of the small class which sells strong drink, or by that degraded stratum of the population which is enslaved by it. We do not need to fear either. But we do need to fear God, and I say deliberately that all the peddling regulations of the Control Board, all the cleverly calculated restrictions of hours, all the permissions to lessen the strength of the

liquors sold, are in face of the stupendous evil which confronts us a deliberate mockery of the Most High. I am not accusing the Board of Control; the guilt is that of the nation which consented through its representatives to lay on the Board of Control a responsibility which it had not itself the courage to face, and to which no Board could possibly be equal. But it is a guilt which will defeat all our prayers.

I will refer only to one other aspect of the subject in which insincerity is conspicuous. We have been told from the beginning that victory depends upon our economical strength. The cost of the war transcends imagination. Our rulers in every degree are preaching economy to us night and day. Before you spend a single penny, they say to us, ask whether you cannot do without what you are going to buy. Thrift is not only a virtue, it is almost the supreme virtue, and waste is the sin of sins. But is there any waste like this? Every year in this country we spend about £180,000,000 in strong drink. The government is compelling us to economise by prohibiting the importation of what it considers needless luxuries. At the very best the saving will be small. But here is a mighty stream of waste—and far worse than waste, of devastation and poison—flowing on without ceasing,

and no one proposes to arrest its course. Is this sincere? Is it the conduct of hearts right with God? The Board of Agriculture is perambulating the country at present urging people to grow vegetables and to rear pigs and poultry, that there may be more food for the people; but what do all the extra patches of cabbage and potatoes, all the additional pigs and fowls mean, compared with the millions of bushels of grain which are destroyed annually for strong drink? Our missionaries in China, in times of famine, pointed to the lands covered with poppy that might have been covered with rice or wheat, as a lesson to the Chinese; is it not a lesson that we need as well as the heathen? It is impossible to say anything of the wickedness and folly of this waste that can come up to the truth. The nation is sorely wounded by the war, yet in the liquor trade it opens its own veins, and helps to bleed itself white. To regard sin in one's heart suggests something secret, that we should not like to avow; but it is a higher degree of impiety and insolence to pile up year after year this monumental waste and wickedness, and then to think of prayer. We dare not pray unless we shut our eyes to it, but we cannot shut the eyes of God. He that is higher than the highest regardeth: God is not mocked.

I cannot conclude without saying a word about that expression which is so much in every one's mouth—'for the period of the war.' No doubt it has a legitimate application. There are inconveniences we must put up with for our good while the war lasts—the darkening of our streets, for instance. But the war has revealed to us, in the searching light of God, many things in our national life which ought not to be as they are, and when we speak of interrupting them for the period of the war we are regarding iniquity in our heart, and the Lord will not hear us. If it is wrong for an individual or a class to exploit the nation's need now, it is always wrong. If it is wrong to pile up huge profits during the war, with no regard to what they cost, it will be wrong when the war is over. If workshop customs which have made slacking a fine art and have been maintained by a brutal tyranny are suspended meantime in the interest of the nation, they ought to be suspended for ever in the interest of honest industry. It is quite honourable to get all you can for your work, but it is degrading and dishonest to give as little as you can for your wages. If the prohibition of the common sale of intoxicants is good now for the reasons stated, it is always good, and we want it permanently. It is mocking

God, it is regarding sin in our hearts, when we apply the period of the war to matters of right and wrong. The war has revealed vices, follies, sins, by which the very life of the nation is threatened, and this of intemperance is conspicuous among them. We know how to deal with it, for we know how our allies have dealt with it. And I do not believe we shall begin to win the war—I do not believe we deserve to win—I do not believe we can pray to win except with an insincerity that provokes the resentment of the Most High, till we have swept this evil thing from the life of the nation, not for the period of the war, but for ever.

XIII

DEVOTION

DEVOTION

'He would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord.'—2 Sam. xxiii. 16.

The last half of the second book of Samuel is the most tragic part of Bible history. Even to repeat the names which figure in it fills us with pity and fear: Uriah the Hittite and his wife Bathsheba, Amnon and Tamar, Ahithophel and Absalom, Joab and Shimei, Rizpah the daughter of Aiah and her unhappy sons hanged before the Lord in Gibeon, and above all David himself, to a vast extent the cause as he was the centre of all this guilt and misery. The horror of it is relieved by the sacred writer reverting at the close to the happier days of David's career, and recalling some of the heroic incidents which in spite of his faults always secured his place in the heart of the nation. The finest of these is the one of which I wish to speak. It is the finest because it gives us a view of the finest side of David's character. It is as though God were saying to him, 'I remember unto thee the kindness of thy youth. All you have done in these later years cannot make me forget what you once

were, or cease to hope that you may come again to the nobleness which was once native to you.'

Possibly what strikes many when they read David's exclamation, 'Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate,' is how good it is to be born and brought up in the country. If his early associations had been with localities like the Gallowgate in Glasgow, or the Canongate in Edinburgh, he could never have had such a longing rise in his heart. And it is not fanciful to say that it is a solid advantage to a man when the memories of his childhood are of things open air, wholesome and clean; it is part of his inner strength, the reserve he can fall back upon, when the wear and tear of life become trying. But what we find in the incident taken as a whole is a lesson on devotion, and for simplicity I will put it under three heads. (1) It suggests how devotion is inspired; (2) how devotion is exhibited; and (3) how devotion ought to be appreciated.

1. It is quite plain that the devotion of the three mighty men was inspired by David himself. We can imagine how his sigh for a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem might have been responded to. Very likely there were people there who smiled sympathetically, as if they

quite understood, but could not refrain from an ironical glance at the camp of the Philistines which lay between them and the well. But the three mighty men took it far otherwise. A sudden resolve to give the king his desire flamed up in their hearts, and by an act of incredible daring they carried out their resolution. They broke through the host of the Philistines, drew water out of the well, and took it and brought it to David. They would not have done it for any other man in the world, but they did it for him. Why? I believe the answer is that there was something in David himself which was akin to this deed; something magnanimous and high-hearted, and at the same time so natural that in presence of it other men felt something akin to it in themselves. David could be heroic, but he never felt that his bravery separated him from other men. It was the courage of which human nature is capable in which he faced the lion and the bear and the Philistine giant. He rejoiced as a brave man does in brave deeds, and therefore brave men flocked to his banner, and under the inspiration of his presence rose to heights of bravery which no doubt astonished themselves.

We can understand the value of such a man to an army, and especially to an ancient army in

which much depended on personal prowess. It is a great thing to have a leader who can raise all human faculties to a higher power. The most successful war our country ever waged was the Seven Years' War in the eighteenth century; and it was a soldier of that period who said of the great War Minister who directed it—No one ever came out of Mr. Pitt's closet without feeling himself a braver man. If we can find it, this is the sort of company to keep. It is quite easy to find what may be called 'lowering' company, company that robs us of faith in the nature God has given us, makes us disbelieve in others and in ourselves, checks ardour, discredits every generous impulse; but to cultivate it is to cultivate the wisdom of the world which is foolishness with God. 'I have known a man,' said Goethe, 'who without saying a word could suddenly silence a party engaged in cheerful conversation by the mere force of his mind.' This is a baleful force, and to be shunned. I, for my part, have had the happiness to know a man whose influence was of precisely the opposite kind: it mobilised all your faculties to put your hand on his door bell. This is the kind of friend we need to raise us to a higher level of being, and how much we all need to be raised! Without being anything but deeply grateful to God for the

help He gives us through each other, it is surely for Christians to reflect that the chief of all such friends is Christ. What this story says to us in the first instance is, If you wish to have your nature quickened, if you wish to be inwardly reinforced, and raised above yourself, live in the presence of the King. The simplicity of Jesus, the naturalness of magnanimity in Him, His fidelity to us, His trust in us, the frankness with which He leaves His interest in our hands as if it were inconceivable that we should prove false to Him; these will stir us to devotion if anything will. Jesus cast Himself into the breach for us; He did it in our nature and for our good; and the one hope we have of becoming better men—more simple, more spontaneous, more generous—is to catch in our own life the inspiration of His.

We need to remember this particularly in what we speak of as Christian work—the attempt to benefit others by helping them to rise in the spiritual scale. Goodness akin to that of Jesus can not be bought or won from others by any kind of bribe, it can only be inspired by devotion to them. One of the most vivid pictures in the book of Samuel, and an extraordinarily vivid contrast to this one, is that in which the suspicious and unhappy Saul reproaches the disloyalty of

his followers. 'Hear now, ye Benjamites, will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, will he make you all captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, that all of you have conspired against me?' It was not for fields and vineyards that the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines. To yield its highest fruits, human nature must be appealed to on its highest side. There is a familiar saying that if you wish to do anything for men you must not expect too much from them. It is refuted by every magnanimous deed; it is repudiated by every magnanimous soul. I do not know who first uttered it, but we cannot imagine that it came from a spirit like that of David, still less like that of our Lord. If we want to see good among men, we must believe all things and hope all things. We must have faith in others that they may have faith in themselves, and avoid the lowering and disheartened tone, which means that we give up the battle before it is begun. Why should it be counted a thing incredible with us, especially to-day, that men should rise to any height of devotion to which humanity has ever attained? They are doing things as wonderful and heroic as this every hour.

2. I come now to the second point—the way in

which devotion is shown. It breaks forth suddenly, spontaneously, not as obedience to any law, but as an irresistible impulse, which does not stop to think of profit or loss. No doubt there were people in the camp of David who, if the plan of the three mighty men had been submitted to them beforehand, would have had many wise things to say against it. It would never have survived an ordinary council of war. It would have been suppressed as a mad prank, risking valuable lives for a whim. Could not the king quench his thirst, or bear it, like other people? Anyhow, he never meant by his natural ejaculation to prompt so reckless an enterprise, and if he knew of it he would be sure to forbid it. We can easily imagine all the utilitarian criticism, and how completely it would be thrown away on spirits soaring to this daring exploit. They were not doing it for gain, or for praise, or because it was wise, but because it was *in* them to do it for the king; and they would have been false to all that was highest in their life if they had shrunk from its inspiration. There is a kind of wisdom with which a noble spirit will never have any dealings: it does not understand it nor want to understand it; it can only say of those who preach or practise its prudent counsels, O my soul, come not thou into their

secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united. There is a fine French saying, that magnanimity owes prudence no account of its motives, and it will always justify devotion against utilitarianism.

And surely, when we think of it truly, such devotion as we read of in this story is not a waste or an idle risk of life. It was not so at the time. The three mighty men took their lives in their hand—they knew it—but they never lived so intensely as in the few minutes of that daring raid. 'One crowded hour of glorious life is worth an age without a name.' To them it was worth all it cost. It was worth all it cost, also, to the followers of David at that moment. What a thrill would pass through the camp as the comrades of the three mighty men realised what they were doing! what eager eyes would follow their progress! how the earth would ring again to the shouts which welcomed them back! What proud confidence of victory would swell in the hearts of their fellows as they looked across again to the hosts of the uncircumcised! And if this great deed of devotion was not in vain at the moment, who could estimate its worth for ages to come? It was worth armies to Israel. As long as the nation was a nation the hearts of Hebrew boys would beat high as they

heard it, and thought, These were our men. When we read it to-day in church, in the New Testament age, can we help asking whether anything so fine is inspired in us by what we call our religion. There are things every whit as fine in human life. We must all have seen in the papers a few weeks ago the story of a young officer, a second lieutenant, who was awarded the Victoria Cross after his death. He had accidentally dropped a bomb in a trench which he occupied with his men. It was about to explode, and he instantly sprang out to a place of safety calling on them to follow. Realising immediately that they had not understood or had not time to escape, he sprang back and threw himself on the bomb as it exploded, saving their lives at the cost of his own. Everything in this was spontaneous, uncalculating, devoted, and it is here that its power lies. And the goodness which is to have any power over others must have this same spontaneous, uncalculating, and devoted character. There is plenty of integrity in the Church. There are upright persons in abundance, both men and women, who maintain the moral equilibrium of society. Nothing is further from my intention than to disparage them; they are entitled to the utmost respect, and as a rule they receive it. But

there is not much in simple integrity that has power to inspire and redeem. The same holds even more strongly of the goodness which habitually assumes the attitude of protest—the reflecting self-conscious goodness which has decided that certain things, though widely allowed in society, are wrong, and that therefore in spite of the accepted standard it will not countenance them. As long as the world lies in the wicked one, the attitude of protest is inevitable ; a good conscience will be a puritan and nonconforming conscience. But even if such a conscience keeps clear of everything Pharisaical and self-righteous, of everything contemptuous or censorious, it is not inspiring ; it has no redemptive virtue in it. It is only the goodness of devotion—natural, spontaneous, uncalculating, self-abandoning—which exerts a Christian influence upon others. I once asked my late colleague, Dr. Orr, what he thought would happen if a time of religious persecution returned in Scotland : would the Church be able to stand it ? He had no doubt of it. I know, he said, that there are men and women in Scotland who, if it came to that, would die rather than deny the Lord Jesus. I believe so too ; but even this passive devotion, which is equal to the utmost that can be inflicted on it, is not at the height of that devotion

which takes the initiative in generous deeds. Do opportunities never come to us of showing by action what it is in us to do in the service of our King? There is a long line of heroes of the faith from the apostolic age to our own: have we ever done anything which makes the deeds of those who are conspicuous in it intelligible to us? A selfish heart is cut off from the large life and the great joy of the world. I say again, Let us live in the presence of the King till we are carried away by it, and serve others as He served us.

3. Finally, we come to the point of how devotion is appreciated, or ought to be. A truly difficult situation was created when the three mighty men returned bringing the water for which they had risked their lives. Only one man in the camp really knew what they had done; not even they themselves knew so well as he. That man was David, who in that hour, if ever in all his career, showed himself a man after God's own heart, the proudest man in Israel and the humblest. He took the water, but he dared not take it to himself. He could not quench his thirst at such a cost: it would be too awful an anticlimax for a scene so heroic—David taking a drink. Devotion like that of these three mighty men, David felt, belonged to God alone, and he poured out the

water *to the Lord.* Perhaps the three mighty men were disappointed for a moment. Dr. Chalmers was disappointed, which shows that Dr. Chalmers, though a truly magnanimous man, was not so magnanimous as David. If David had been the kind of man who could have drunk that water, he would never have got the chance. But in a situation which was really a searching test of what was in him, he came out triumphant. A truly heroic act reminds a kindred spirit of God. It is appropriate for Him, and lifts us into the region of the Divine. What might have been a harum-scarum adventure, or a mere reinforcement of patriotic pride, becomes an act of worship: it is ennobled, solemnised, and made worthy of a place in Scripture, by being consecrated to God.

We can hardly avoid the melancholy reflection that appreciation of devotion, such as David here showed, is almost as rare as such devotion itself. Yet it is a part of true goodness and of the sense of God in which Christians should not be deficient. We have an obvious illustration of what is meant in the ordinary attitude of society to soldiers and sailors. Sometimes it is excused by pointing to the gulf between the ideal and the actual. In idea, the soldier is a man who holds himself in readiness to give his life for his country, but in

reality, as the Duke of Wellington said, he may be the scum of the earth. Nevertheless, if he were not there and ready to die at the call of duty, the nation could not live an hour. He is our ransom, and the most worthless character who has it in him to stake his life for a cause greater than himself is nearer God than the most respectable person who lives by his devotion, and never thinks what it means. Are there not some of us who drink every day the water that has cost human lives, and have no idea that there is something which is truly divine in all such sacrifices? Or quite apart from armies and navies we may make the same reflection. In every great community there are those who are supported in affluence by the labour of others who make very little by their labour for themselves. There are fine houses, fine gardens, fine dresses, long holidays; and what is behind them all? The toil and sweat and life-blood of multitudes whom it is too easy to forget, or rather never to remember. This is what David called the water that was brought him by the three heroes: 'the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives.' If our life is made easy by the toil and sacrifices of others, do not let us be so base as to be oblivious of it—still less, so malignant as to look down on those

to whom we owe everything as if they were not of the same flesh and blood as ourselves. Possibly there is as much unappreciated devotion in the relations of family life as in any department of our existence. How much parents do for their children, or sisters for a brother, or whole families sometimes for an erring member, without awaking any recognition or gratitude, much less any answering devotion. But that is no reason for ceasing to show devotion. If such things are overlooked or selfishly taken for granted on earth, they are not forgotten in heaven. They never fail to be appreciated by the King. He knows that devotion is divine—that it is inspired by God and worthy of God—and He estimates it at its true value. When He sits at last on the throne of His glory, He says, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father . . . . inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto Me.' Unto Him that loveth us and loosed us from our sins by His blood, and made us a kingdom, even priests, to His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

XIV

ENDURANCE

ENDURANCE

'The kingdom of God is within you.

'The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.' LUKE xvii. 21-22.

THE Kingdom of God was the great subject of the teaching of Jesus, and the great religious interest of His time. But though all pious people, and many who were not pious, thought and spoke of the Kingdom, they had not all the same thing in their minds. They differed as to what it was, and as to when and how it should appear. They differed as to who were entitled to a place in it, and as to the terms on which men might hold high places in it. The very magnitude of the idea baffled them. We can be pretty sure that what was perplexing then is perplexing still, and that those whose minds are vexed with inconsistencies and impossibilities when they try to conceive the Kingdom of God and to believe in it, will find something in this section of our Lord's teaching to help them. There is a connection through it all from Luke xvii. 20 to Luke xviii. 8.

We are told that the Pharisees asked Jesus when the Kingdom of God should come. Strictly

speaking, this implies that the Kingdom of God was not there. It was purely in the future, and the Pharisees scanned the face of heaven and earth for tokens of its advent. They were literally on the look *out* for its approach. The answer of Jesus means that this attitude is wrong to begin with. The Kingdom of God does not come with observation. It does not come in outward events to which you can point saying, Look here, or Look there. The Kingdom of God is within you. This is the first thing we have to learn about it: it is spiritual, and its seat is in the heart. Its felicities are enjoyed there, its loyalties are displayed there; if we do not take in this, everything about it will remain obscure to us.

But surely it ought not to be difficult to take in this. The Kingdom of God is a state of things in which God is King—in which His Fatherly sovereignty is acknowledged as the supreme Power ruling and blessing His creatures. Now in the world of nature that sovereignty does not need to be established, for it has never been contested; the Kingdom of God does not need to come, for it has always been here. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. 'Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.' Or as

another psalm has it, 'For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven: Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to Thine ordinances, for all are Thy servants.' That can be said of nature without reserve: the inanimate creatures of God acknowledge His sovereignty; they speak His praise; in the great temple of earth and sky and sea everything says Glory. But when we pass from the natural to the moral world what becomes of God's Kingdom? Where is His sovereignty exercised now? Where is the blessedness of it experienced? Where is its authority confessed? There is only one answer to these questions, and that is the answer which our Lord here gives to the Pharisees: 'The Kingdom of God is within you.' So far as the world of rational and moral beings is concerned, the Kingdom of God is where human hearts and wills bow before God as King. It can only come as God wins our souls for Himself and realises a sovereignty on earth through the hearts and wills of His children—through our faith and love, our gratitude, joy and obedience.

All this is plain, but there is something in the very conception of a Kingdom that tends to carry us past this inward and individualistic point of view, and our Lord seems to have foreseen that

this something, craving another satisfaction, would assert itself in the minds of the disciples. He said to them, 'The days will come when ye will desire to see one of the days of the Son of man.' I used to think this meant that in the trying future which awaited them the disciples would wish they could have Jesus with them again for a day—that is, have Him back among them—as the Highland soldier badly led is said to have cried, O for an hour of Dundee! But I am quite sure that that is wrong. A day of the Son of man does not mean another day of Jesus' company as they used to enjoy it in the days of His flesh; it means a day of the glorious sovereignty predicted for Him in the book of Daniel, and often spoken of by the evangelists—one of the days when He sits on the throne of universal and eternal rule, and when all things are put under His feet. They will long to see the time when the sovereignty of God is visibly and unchallengeably established on the earth—the time for which we are all longing now—when war and all its horrors will have ceased—when there will be no more drunkenness and lust, no more oppression and cruelty—when the will of the Father will be done on earth as it is in heaven—one day of that! And it is with reference to the desire to see one of these days that our Lord

utters the solemn and startling words, 'Ye shall not see it.'

We must not run away with the idea that in the lips of Jesus these are words of despair. Nothing in all the gospels is more indubitable than Jesus' assurance of victory. It was as certain to Him as His own being that the time was coming when He would sit on the throne of His glory and rule over a kingdom in which the sovereignty of God was universally and joyfully acknowledged. He does not say that there never will be days of the Son of man, but only that when the disciples, under the stress of earth's trials, long to see one of them, they will not see it. The state in which we live here will be to the very end a state of trial. It will always make demands on faith and patience. Even when we have learned that the Kingdom of God is within us—when we have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious—when we have given up our wills to His good and holy will—we shall still need to say to ourselves, *He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.* We shall still need to be companions in the tribulation and Kingdom and patience of Jesus.

The circumstances in which we live at present, and which have so cruelly shocked many accepted ideas about the prospects of our race, give a new

interest to anything we can learn about our Lord's anticipation of the future. If there was any idea which seemed to have won for itself a fixed place in men's minds, it was that of progress. The world was advancing continually; rising, perhaps slowly, yet perhaps faster than we were aware, from lower to higher levels; men's ideals and their achievements alike were expanding; often it was said there had been more progress in the last hundred years or in the last three hundred, than in thousands which preceded them. People who were interested in science found it comparatively easy to prove this of scientific progress, and just in proportion as their interest in this was exclusive, it seemed to carry everything else along with it. But it has been made painfully plain to us that science can be put at the service of the evil as well as of the good, and that the advance of science is not synonymous with the coming of the Kingdom of God. And though men have believed in moral progress as well as in scientific, it is much more difficult to prove. There cannot at the same time be more knowledge in the world and more ignorance, for the knowledge extinguishes the ignorance. But there may be at the same time more goodness in the world and more badness, for it is the nature of badness to resist goodness,

and it may resist more powerfully just in proportion as the goodness is strong. When Jesus lived among men, evil was strong enough to inflict the Cross upon Him; and nothing in His teaching, or in the New Testament anywhere, encourages us to expect in this world a state of things in which the Christian will be exempted from the cross. Let moral progress be as great as we can conceive, yet we will never come in the flesh to a condition in which goodness will be charmingly easy, and the following of Jesus the path of least resistance. It is idle for Christians to talk about optimism and pessimism, about whether the world is growing worse or growing better; the real question is whether it is easier or harder than it once was to imitate Christ. As far as I can appreciate the mind of the Master, the world is to grow both better and worse; the wheat and the tares are to grow together until the harvest; good and evil are to get the chance, and to take the chance, of showing all they can do—how good goodness can be, and how bad badness; the last disciple, as well as the Captain of his Salvation, will have a cross to bear. The progress of the world is not in good only, or in bad only, but in the antagonism between the two: the Christian's watchword in it to the end is, The combat deepens: on, ye brave. Do not

cherish illusions about seeing under present conditions one of the days of the Son of man, when everything will become easy. Remember rather that the Kingdom of God is within you, and that in the consciousness of that inward strength you must *overcome* the world.

Part of the trial of life, which makes people long for the great decisive change meant by the coming of the Son of man, is its monotony, or at all events its uniformity. Much of our life, indeed the whole framework of it, is determined for us by nature, and we grow up into it, and into all the pressures and temptations incident to it, whether we will or no. The mere faith that the world is to have an end—that the Son of man is coming to judge or to save—does not annul this mechanism of life, or save us from coming under its spell. When Jesus looks into the future, He does not see that in this respect it is going to be different from the past. As it was in the days of Noah, as it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be in the Christian dispensation. They ate, they drank; they bought, they sold; they planted, they builded; they married wives, they were given in marriage. How could they help it? All these things were imposed upon them; they were involved in the inevitable structure and working of human society.

Yes, but how inevitably temptation comes with them all to the end, as it came with them at the beginning. What possibilities of evil are inseparable from a life so constituted! If there is eating and drinking, there may be gluttony and drunkenness; if there is buying and selling, there may be over-reaching and covetousness; if there is planting and building, there may be display and pride; if there is marrying and giving in marriage, there may be infidelities and sensualities which are bad just in proportion as what they corrupt is good. And over and above this or that, there is the power of the whole order which we live to benumb our spiritual nature, and to make us drift on from day to day without unity of purpose, without concentration, without the effective recognition of the sovereignty of God in our life—perhaps professing to believe in progress, but not having the Kingdom of God within us. 'As it was in the days of Noah, as it was in the days of Lot.' This it is against which we are warned by Jesus: the trial is one which no man can evade, be the moral advance of the world what it will; and our only security against it is the cherished sovereignty of God in the soul.

For we must remember that in spite of all the superficial sameness and monotony, there is a

deep difference in men's lives within. It was so in the ancient days to which Jesus referred. Life went on as usual in the time of Noah, but the flood came when it was due, and Noah entered into the Ark, and the godless were swept away. It went on as usual in the time of Lot, but when the cup of Sodom's iniquities was full, the Lord hurried him out of that city of destruction, and rained fire and brimstone on it from heaven. Nothing could exceed the solemnity with which our Lord points the application of this for His disciples. It is as if He said to us, You are living in a world in which moral distinctions seem to be ambiguous or evanescent; all lives, you say to yourselves, are alike; all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation; there is nothing here but eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage; we are all pursuing the same voyage; we are all in the same boat; there is nothing to anticipate but that we shall all sink or swim together. It is not true, though it is the temptation of our present state and the secret thought of many hearts. 'I say unto you, In that night there shall be two men on one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left.' Taken means taken by the Son of man, taken to Himself, taken to the glory of the

Father; and left just means left. No outward circumstances could be more nearly identical than those of two men sleeping in one bed, but there may be an infinite and eternal difference between them. 'Two women shall be grinding together'—doing the same household duty—preparing or serving the same meals: 'the one shall be taken, the other shall be left.' What is it that makes the difference? It is that the one has the Kingdom of God within, and the other has not. The heart in the one case has been opened to the salvation and the sovereignty of God, and in the other it has not. Hence, when the day comes for the Son of man to be revealed, the one is meet for the inheritance of the saints in the light, and the other is not. The one is taken and the other is left. Such is the word of Jesus.

Much has been said about the effect of the special conditions under which we are living upon the spiritual life. There are those who have always hoped for a revival of religion as a result of the war, and we hear sometimes from chaplains of a new seriousness in the minds of men face to face with death. But war is not a new thing in history, though it may in its present form be a new thing to us; and while its great hours evoke great virtues, it can hardly be questioned that its general

effect on men is to harden and degrade. Even if it were otherwise, and we counted on spiritual results from it on which I do not think we can reasonably count, the war and its expected results might only be another temptation to say, Lo here, and to forget that the Kingdom of God is within us. It is in the heart we can be sure of it, and nowhere else; and we can be sure of it in the heart whatever our outward circumstances may be. In the Beatitudes our Lord shows us the marks of those who are citizens in the Kingdom of God, and these are their own evidence in defiance of all that is without. It is on them we must fix our eyes. Blessed are the poor in spirit? Yes, even if they live among the haughty and self-sufficient who despise them. Blessed are the pure in heart? Yes, even if they have to pitch their tent in Sodom, and live in a world where art and literature are prostituted to lust. Blessed are the meek? Yes, even though they are confronted all day long with insolence and force, and scorned and trodden under foot. Blessed are the merciful? Yes, though the whole world should go in for the policy of frightfulness. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness? Yes, though great powers should proclaim that might is right, that they may do whatever they can do, and that

necessity knows no law, blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness. It is in the recognition of these truths, in fidelity to them, in joyous and whole-hearted acceptance of them, whatever the conditions in which we live, that we have the Kingdom of God within us. It makes an infinite difference within, however much on the surface our life may look like that of other men. And it makes an infinite difference to the issue—the difference between taken and left.

But while it is possible to live in this world of spiritual reality, and to have the Kingdom of God and all its blessings within, it is not easy. That is the meaning of the Parable of the Importunate Widow. The widow stands for the wronged and oppressed people of Christ, wearying and crying for one of the days of the Son of man—longing for the vindication of God and His cause in a cruel and wicked world. Will it ever come? Will the King ever take to Himself His mighty power and reign? Will He gird His sword on His thigh and ride on prosperously in behalf of truth and meekness and righteousness? We have the word of Jesus for it that He will. The Son of man is surely coming to His sovereignty. The Kingdom of God is surely to be established without a rival under heaven. But who shall be taken then,

and who shall be left? When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith upon the earth? Shall He find that you and I have been loyal to Him through all the days of darkness and trial, and are not ashamed before Him at His coming? In His mercy may it be so!

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